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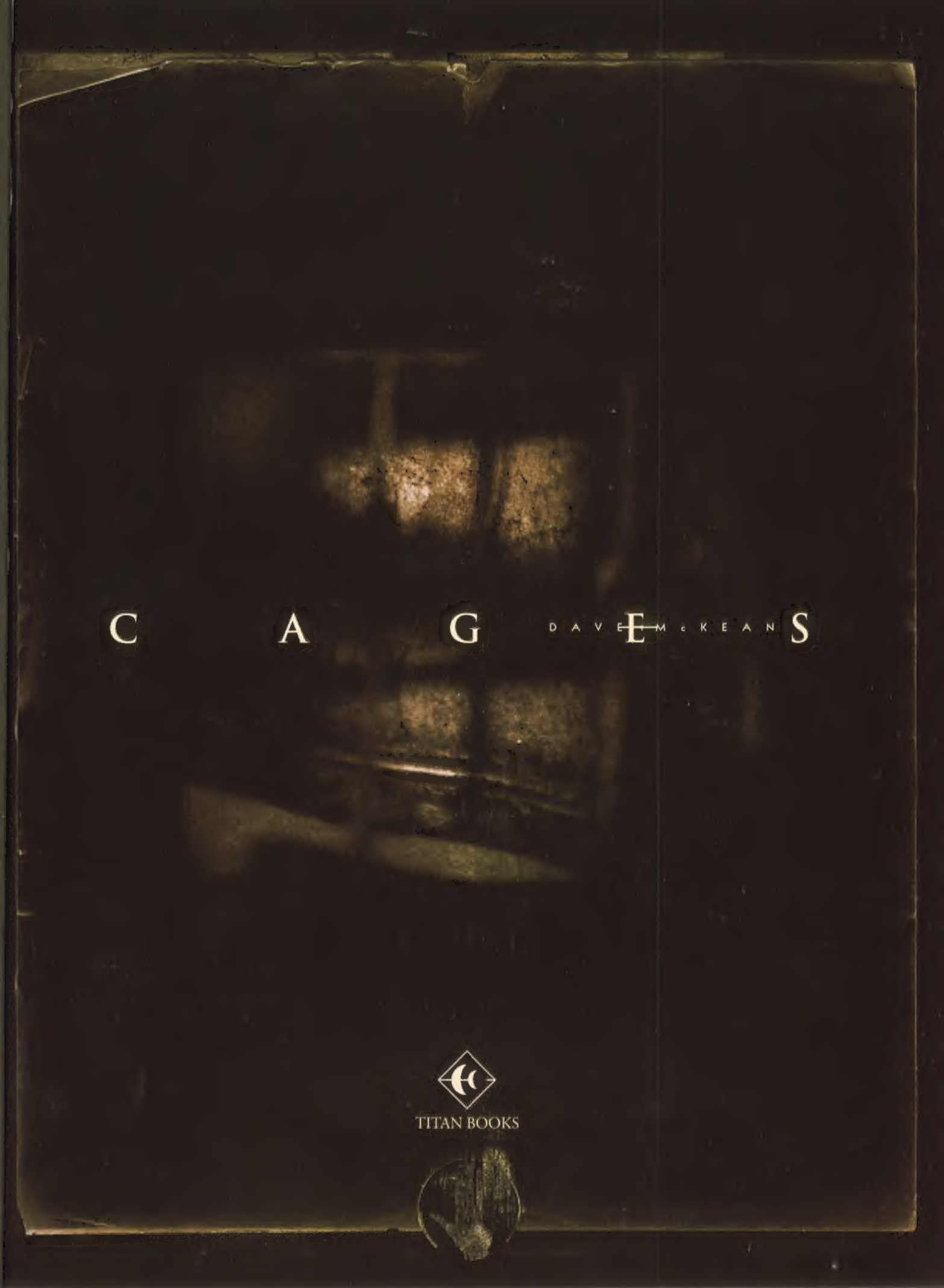

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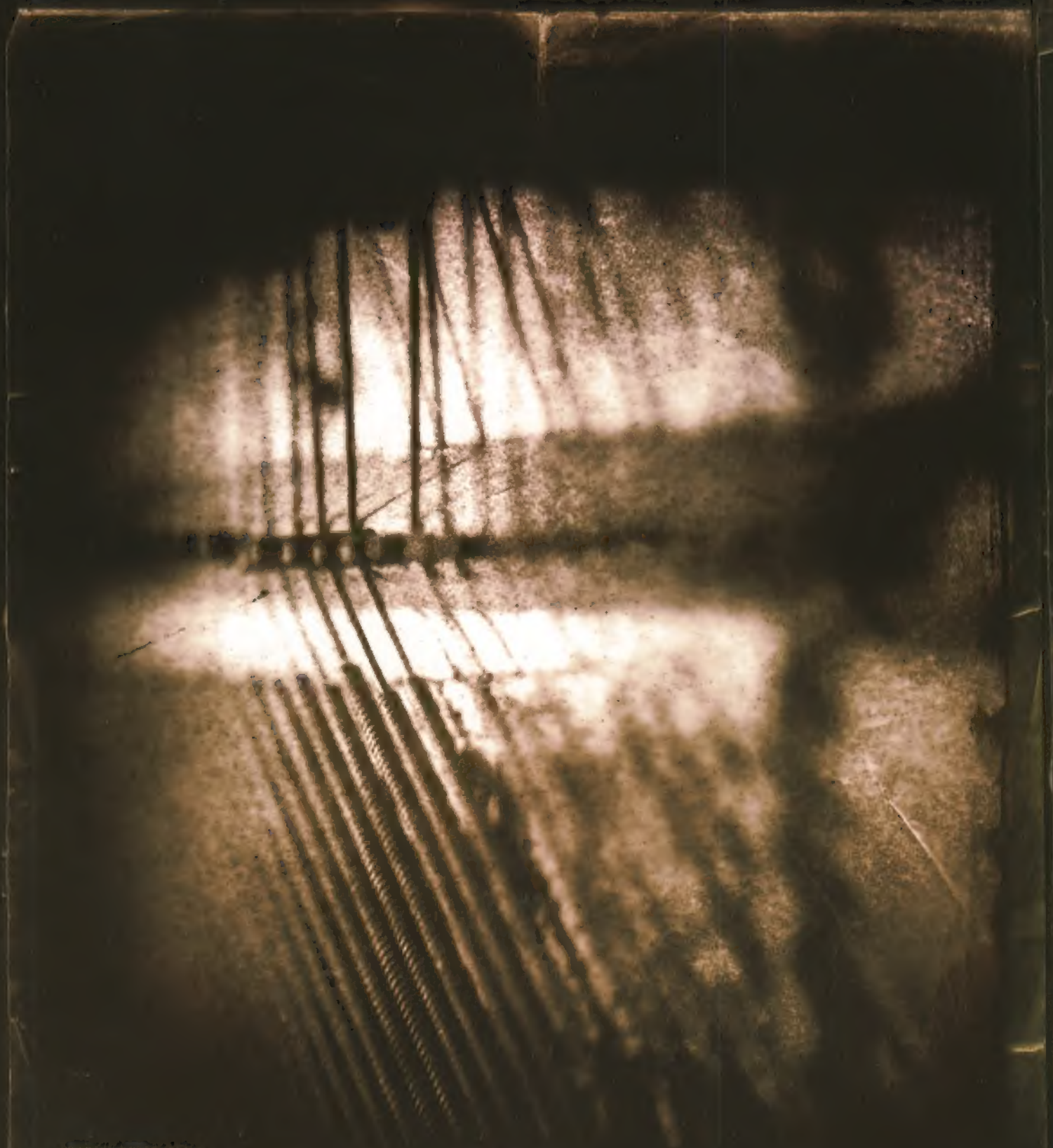

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CAGES

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CASE
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Cages number 1

original COVER GALLERY

Descent

1990

Acrylic, oil pastel, inks, varnish, graphite

16 x 21 inches

Cages number 2

DAVE McKEAN

Drawing a Blank

1991

Wooden frame, photography, bones, thread, acrylic

22 x 32 inches

Cages number 3

In the dark, all cats are grey

1991

Acrylic, ink on photographs

8 x 12 inches

Cages number 4

Time & origami

1991

Copper, cage, jumper, clay, acrylic

34 x 52 inches

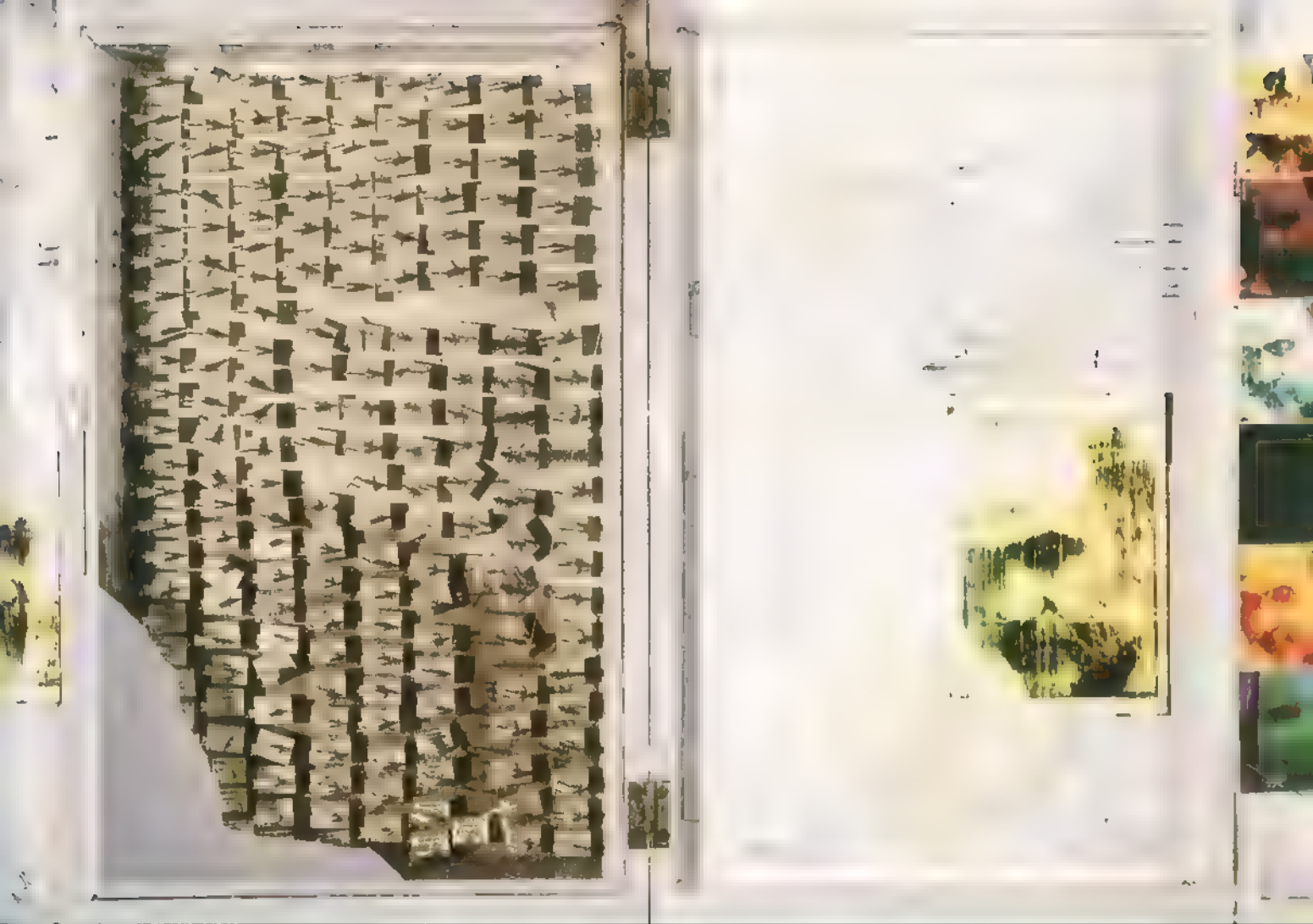
Pages number 7

Strata part one

1992

[illegible]

14 x 20 inches



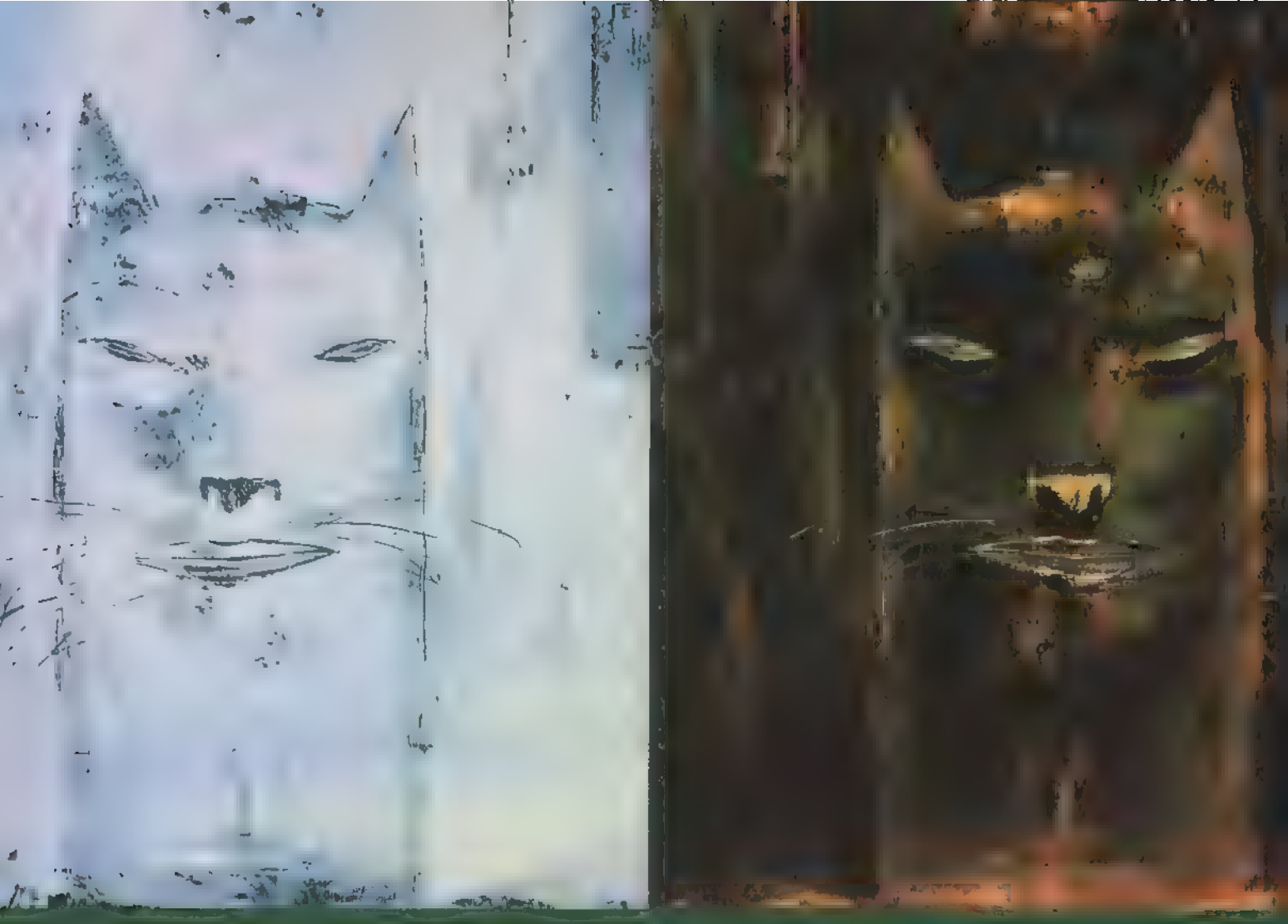
Cages number 6

Strata part two

1992

Insect collection, acrylic, photographs, tracing paper, leaf skeletons, thread, pins

14 x 20 inches



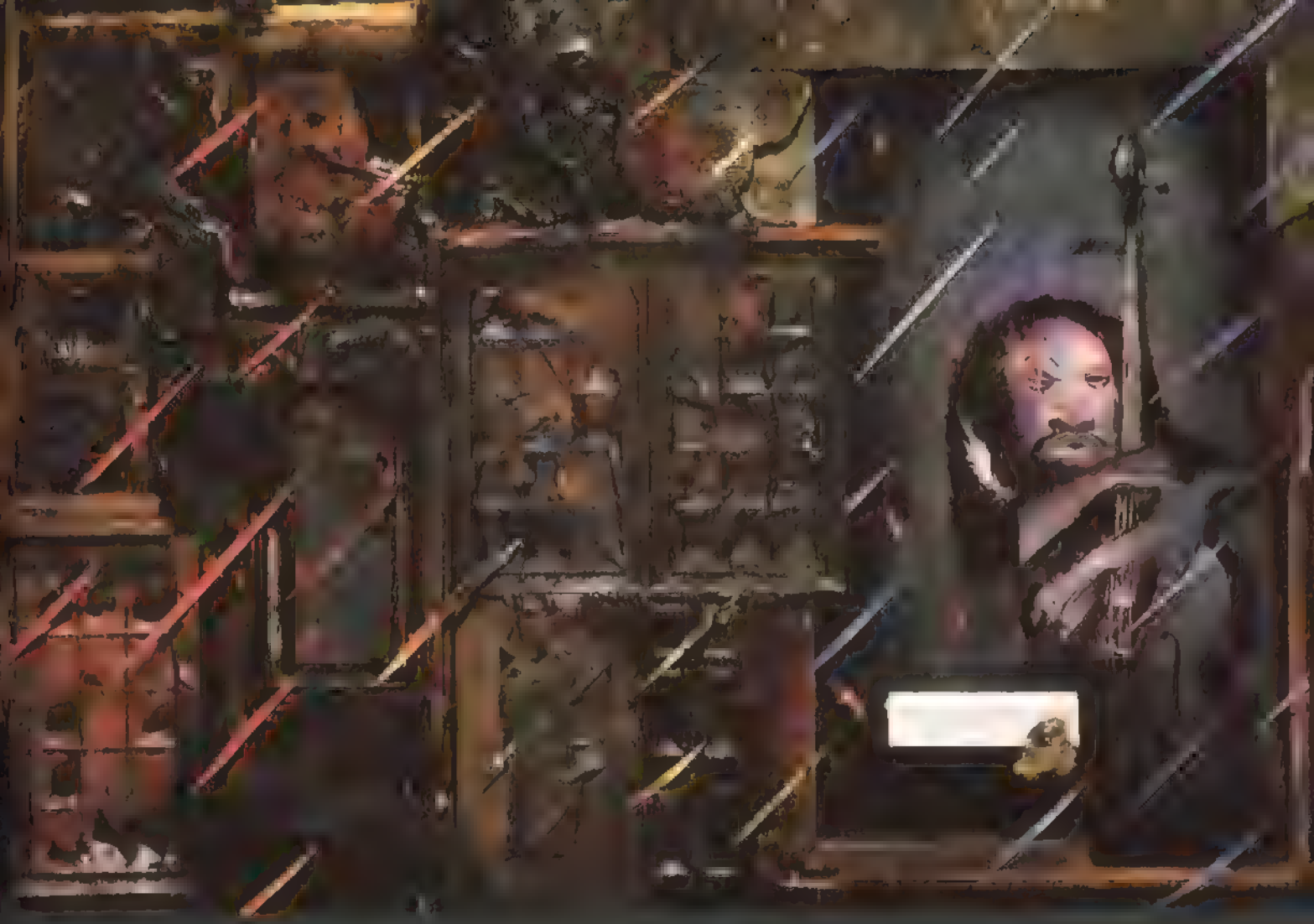
Cages number 7

Schism

1993

Acrylic on photographic color serograph

14 x 20 inches



Cages number 8

Chromatic scale

1993

Acrylic, stone, paper, dolls house windows, tissue paper, ink

22 x 32 inches

Cages number 9

Star Fire Window Stone

1996

Photography

12 x 19 inches

Cages number 10

The Attic

1996

Acrylic, photography, paper collage, Ma

2870 x 4465 pixels

PROLOGUE:
scaffolding

There was plenty of speculation.

And when 'all-there-is' was so new that the sharp scent of creation still held in the air, behind the tarpaulin and the plumb lines and the scaffolding that hid the untarnished vacuum from the hushed and expectant audience, before the grand unveiling, it was said that inside, the blackness was so deep that it could only be a dark and endless ocean.

And in fact, it was.

And while the apprehensive crowds waited patiently, inside the dusty framework there came a raft on this ocean, and at opposite corners sat two friends.
When they first found themselves there in the silence and the dark, they were not aware of each other. One had curiosity and had tried to form an image of himself. He felt himself and decided he was okay.
Average in fact.
And, of course, since he didn't have anyone else to compare himself to, he was right. He was completely average.
The other just sat. She concentrated on forming thoughts. That's all.
Eventually she spoke to the blackness around her.
"There should be some dry land," she whispered.
He started. "What? What was that?"
"I'm here," she said calmly, "we are here together."

And they drifted together, existed together, drifting.

She said, "There should be some dry land. We can't float around forever. We need a world to live on."
She looked at her friend. "Will you do that for me? Will you find some dry land?"
"Are there going to be any people on this world?" he asked.
She thought about this, and finally she nodded. "Yes."
"How long will it be before you make the people?"
"Everything will need dry land," she said. "Dive to the bottom, get some dry land, and then you can make the people."
And so he did.

And although he was only gone a tiny fraction of the time they had spent together, because time had now become marked by the memorable events of the past few moments, he seemed to be gone an awfully long time. Almost longer than she could bear. Her impatience grew inside her.

Finally he surfaced and called out to her. She awoke and returned the call, steering the raft towards his voice. He climbed on board exhausted. All the earth he had found at the bottom of the ocean had melted away except for the dirt in his fingernails. She scraped these fragments together and made a small round muddy ball.
"This," she said, "is the world."
He held the world in his hand, and although he still couldn't see anything, he couldn't really imagine fitting many people on it.
"It's a bit on the small side," he said.
She kicked at his hand and the small ball of earth fell overboard.
There was a sound. Not a splash but a low and terrifying sound. The two friends clung to each other in the blackness.
And the raft ran aground.

The two friends stood up.
"Can I make some people now?" he asked.
"Let's get off this raft first, then we'll see."
Her impatience had become contentment. She was happy with the world. It felt good under her feet.
"Do you really want to spoil the world with more details?"
But he wasn't listening. He was already grabbing handfuls of earth and fashioning his first people. They were rather unsuccessful, but gradually he became more and more adept. He shaped the mud until it felt how he'd always imagined himself to be. He realised that they were beautiful. He realised he was beautiful. And with this knowledge came more and more people.

"I really think you should try something else," she said.
"Like what? I'm good at people."
"Try a sheep," she suggested.
He sat back. "Okay," he said.
He made a sheep and described it to her.
"It sounds a lot like another person," she said. "Perhaps this one shouldn't walk around on two legs."
He tried many things. She named a few of them. He became more and more frustrated, wasting his time on her stupid ideas.

The initial time of excitement faded to routine.

After he made a sheep which was small and furry with eight legs and a hundred eyes, she said he was getting silly.
"How can I work under these conditions," he shouted. "I can't see a bloody thing, I'm groping around here, I can't move for reject sheep, the people are restless."
She too felt restless. She felt another life within her.
"There should be some light here," she said.
"Really? When? Now? What will it look like?" he asked excitedly.
"We shall see," she said.

She concentrated.
They sang songs together.
And finally she felt the life within her stir.
A rip appeared in the fabric surrounding them and light flooded in. Their eyes had never received light before and they were blinded with the whiteness. The light travelled over them, and as they became accustomed to it, it intensified itself, blinding them again.
The light faded as suddenly as it had arrived, leaving the two friends blinking alone in the darkness, watching the dancing colours and patterns swirl in their eyes, leaving them with the knowledge that these visions had nothing to do with the world they had created. They had seen nothing

They sat for awhile.

"Well," she whispered, "what now?"
"It's all going wrong isn't it? It's not what I had in mind."

They sat in silence, then went to sleep.

In the night they had troubled dreams.
He awoke and felt a person near him.
"Did you get it?"
The man sat up. "What?"
"The point? The visions after the light had faded. They were all lies. They were not real."
"I know," he said.
"So how do you know the rest is real?"
"I can feel it."
"But you saw the visions."
"What are you saying?"
"You are insane. You created me, all of us, but we are just figments of your imagination. So were the visions. So is the world."
"But she is real."
"She is your final insanity. You're a mad old thing who's lost his mind and talks to himself in the middle of the ocean."
And the thing that had troubled his dreams grabbed hold of him and wouldn't let go. And he started to doubt, and the patterns disappeared, and then he felt the people fade away, and the sheep and the world, all dissolving, and he drifted again but this time in a black, black sea of doubt. And then the raft and the two friends faded on the horizon.

But something remained. The thought of it. The potential for it. A virus of it. An equation for it. Something embedded itself under the tarpaulin and the plumb lines and the scaffolding so that when the great unveiling took place the deep black vacuum was far from untarnished.

t h e e n d

In the beginning there was the end.

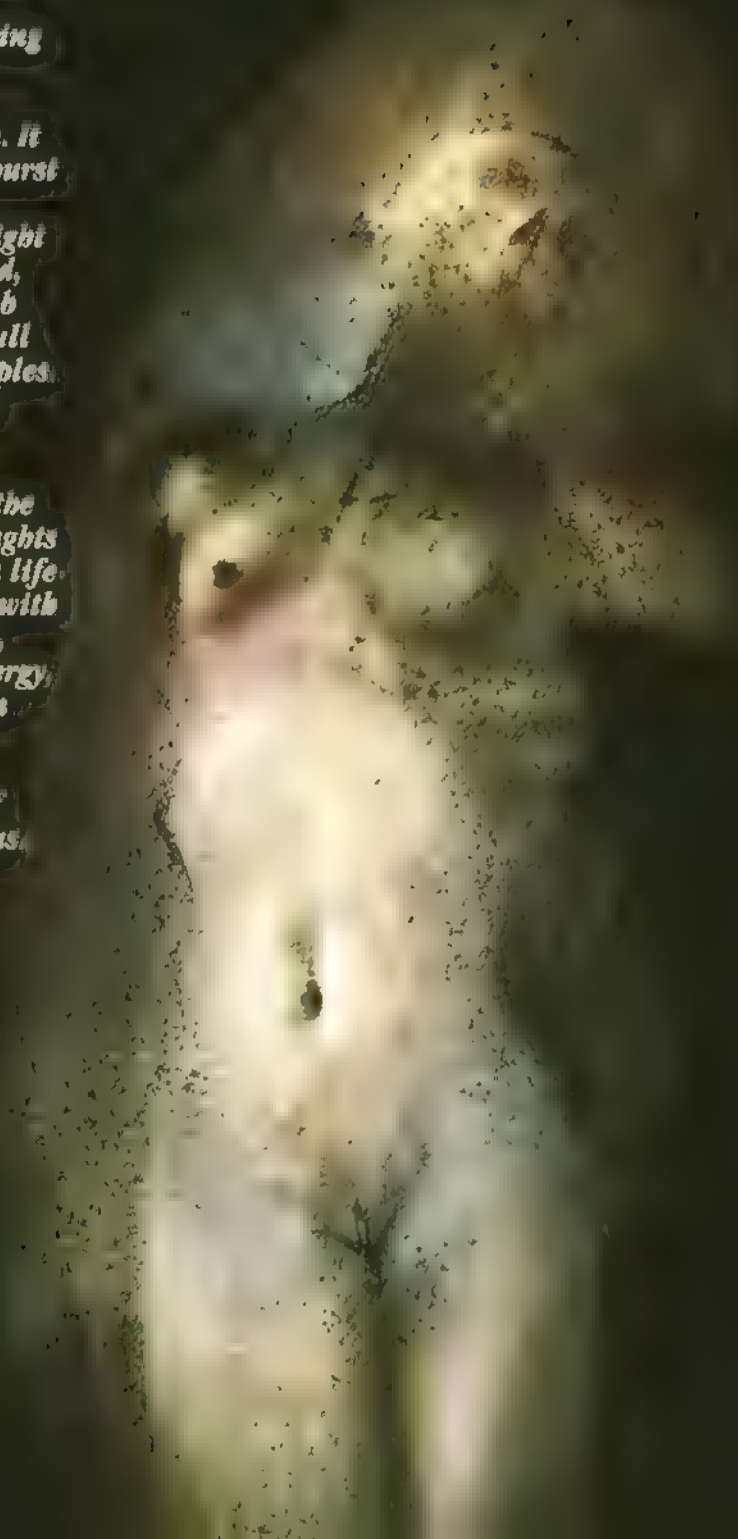
Long before anything thought about the idea of life there existed a bleak and wintry spirit.

And in its deep and disturbed sleep, it dreamed a dream that would give its existence meaning, and after the dream had reached its end, the spirit awoke and repeated it to itself many times so that it would remember every detail, including the part where the dream gave it a name.
"Death," the spirit said to itself, slowly letting the sound of it fold around its breath.

And so Death set about fulfilling the dream. It focussed its thoughts and let them fly and burst inside its head.
At first they were bright and vivid, full of light and imagination, but slowly as time passed, they began to dim. The colours faded to drab and miserable ochres, the light became a dull throbbing greyness which rotted Death's temples. Fearing the dream would never be realised, Death held his head in despair.

And then a strange thing happened. Out of the diseased and deteriorated pool of tired thoughts came life. A simple and poisoned life, but a life nonetheless. Death cultivated this bacteria with love and attention. It thrived in its stifling, hopeless world, sapping Death of all its energy, but Death didn't notice, for all its attention went on the fracturing, multiplying, fragmentary creations inside it.
And when the virus had eaten every fleck of Death, it lived on in Death's dry sarcophagus.

Life implied by Death.



And soon there was earth and a garden,
strange and beautiful creatures singing
songs and telling stories by the light of an
amber sun.
But everything has to sleep, and during
these small deaths, the dream continues
reminding everything of its beginning.
In the beginning there was the end.
And sometimes they see past the fabricated
constructions of existence and glimpse the
cold husk of Death that surrounds
everything.
the end

In the beginning there was nothing.
Not really the calm before the storm, just a kind of calm before some more calm sort of calm.
This would then go on for the longest time.
Until God lifted his immense blue arms and stirred the silt of the universe, and a large vortex spiralled around Him and at the very centre He created His world. Inspired by the chaos which showered around Him, God created life, a wild and frenzied thing which hurled off in all directions, endlessly diversifying itself, to create ever more brilliant patterns and textures, filling the world with a storm of colour and sound.
"That was interesting," said God, and held the world in His all embracing arms and fell asleep.
Slowly, the silt of the universe settled again, restoring a tranquility to everything as the spiral stopped.

When God awoke again, He found life had been busy without Him. There were living things everywhere, and as the dust of the universe had settled, so too a natural order of life had settled on the world, with man as leader. But man had built large towering edifices in He-heaven's honour and their spires scraped at His belly. Indeed, in some areas of the world, man often bumped his head on His all encompassing blueness.
And when He saw a woman spooning away lumps of His heavenly blue to use in a soup to feed her children, He decided He was being taken for granted.
"The bloody cheek of it," said God, and raised His immense body up above the clouds and out of the way of man.

Time eroded the memory of God, the vortex, the creation, the silt of the universe, the spiralling of the galaxy from the memories of man, and eventually God realised He may not have wanted to be taken for granted but He didn't want to be forgotten either. So He decided to visit.

Heaven-He descended to Earth and called on one man to represent all men. He set this man an endless task to keep him occupied and to keep God forever in his mind.
"Long ago," said God, "I alone set the spiralling cogs and wheels of time into motion. Now you must find something to keep time in step here on your world."
"But what am I looking for?" said man.
"Ah," said God, "that is for you to find."

Man set off, fired with enthusiasm but still feeling a bit vague.
God was pleased with Himself. He drank wine and ate fruit to celebrate His brilliant idea.
He got quite drunk.

Meanwhile, man had been thinking. He was beginning to have doubts about the whole venture, and dearly wished he could hear what God was saying behind his back. Then he had an idea.

"What is this strange creature?" said God.
Under a tree sat a furry four-legged animal with a beak and long straggly hair. It cooed to itself and ate grapes.
"I don't remember that one," said God, and He called all the animals to Him.

"What's this then?" asked God.
None of them knew.
The monkey, always wanting to impress, made a few unlikely suggestions, but he was clearly wrong.
"Where's man?" asked a cat. "He knows everything."
God, who was really quite merry by now, couldn't keep His secret any longer, and told the animals about the endless, ridiculous task He had set for man.

"But what is he looking for?" asked the monkey, and God told them.
And the animals laughed at man's folly and God's cleverness for a long time.

But, the strange creature had gone.
He crept back into the jungle, removed the false beak, the furs and the painted markings, and stood erect. Now man knew what he was looking for.

"Well," said man, "I'm back."
God didn't feel very well. "Give up already?" He mumbled.
"No, I have found the 'something' you asked for," and from out of his bag he pulled an octopus.
The octopus squirted its black billowing cloud of ink and everything fell into darkness, and no-one could see anything for quite a long time. And man pulled an owl from his bag, and the white shimmering bird took to the air, and its light let everyone see a little bit. And finally man took out a song bird from his bag. The bird sang and the sun rose out of the sky, charmed into the heavens by the sweetness of the song.
And God was speechless. How could this man have outwitted him?

The days ticked over and years came and went, in time with the spiralling of the universe, but over the years they forgot about Heaven-He. They took him for granted and burned and fouled Him without thinking. Instead they remembered their own God, the man who gave them day and night.

The End

In the beginning God created the world because he could.

He created its landscapes, its waters, its skies and its life and made it His home.

Life was particularly compelling, endless variety, always changing, always perfect. The animals loved their God, and played out their elaborate existence in reverence to Him.

Time, a leaf carried in the fingertips of a breeze, passed.

"Sometimes," said God to one of his cats, "it's easy to be satisfied with what's effortless, especially when everyone tells you it's good."
And God surveyed the world He had created, and saw that it was all relentlessly perfect.
"I can create anything, my imagination is boundless," said God, "Why am I so dissatisfied with my work?"
"I don't know. I think it's a good job," said the cat absently.
"I suppose," said God, "I mean, it does the job, fair enough, no argument. But it kind of makes you wonder what it's all about, doesn't it?"
"Well, you made it," said the cat, "don't you know?"
"Well, when you actually create it all, it's never quite as . . . challenging as you originally have in mind."
The cat looked past his creator ruefully.
"I like the birds particularly," it said.
"Yes," said God, "the birds work for me too. Oh, I don't know, I think I need a break."

And time, the life of a fly swallowed by a fish, the life of the fish mauled by the cat, passed.

...n God found a quiet and desolate corner of the ...d and reached deep, deep inside of Himself for ...piration, and created Himself over, a mirror, a ...placement, a man.
...nd man was perfect.
He understood everything.
And the strange and fascinating complexities of his existence made total and complete sense to him.
He was the truest of God's creations, he saw with God's eyes and made the world his home.
"No, no, no!" God cried in exasperation, "That's not right!"
"What's the matter now?" asked the cat.
"Well, look at it." God pointed to the man who was busy helping a small animal down from a tree.
"It's completely at home with the world."
"So?"
"Makes you sick doesn't it?"
The cat couldn't see the problem really.

...t's all patterns. Everything affects everything else, ...se and effect, life implies death implies life; ...perfect patterns."
..." said the cat, "It seems to work to me."
"Yes, but that's all it does. Once you've put all the pieces of the puzzle together, that's it. The end. There's no mystery, no enigma..."
"No variations!" said the cat, trying to follow but missing the train of thought.
"You know I'd give anything if just once my work could take me by surprise."
"But you know everything," said the cat.
"How can anything take you by surprise?"
"That is my curse," said God.

...And time, a leaden cloud spreading its forlorn shadows over the land, passed.

And God realised He had cursed mankind in His image, and so one day, He called all the men and women together and explained His decision to them, that they needn't know everything, and with a simple thought, God took back some of their knowledge.
...Then God sat back and watched what would happen ...

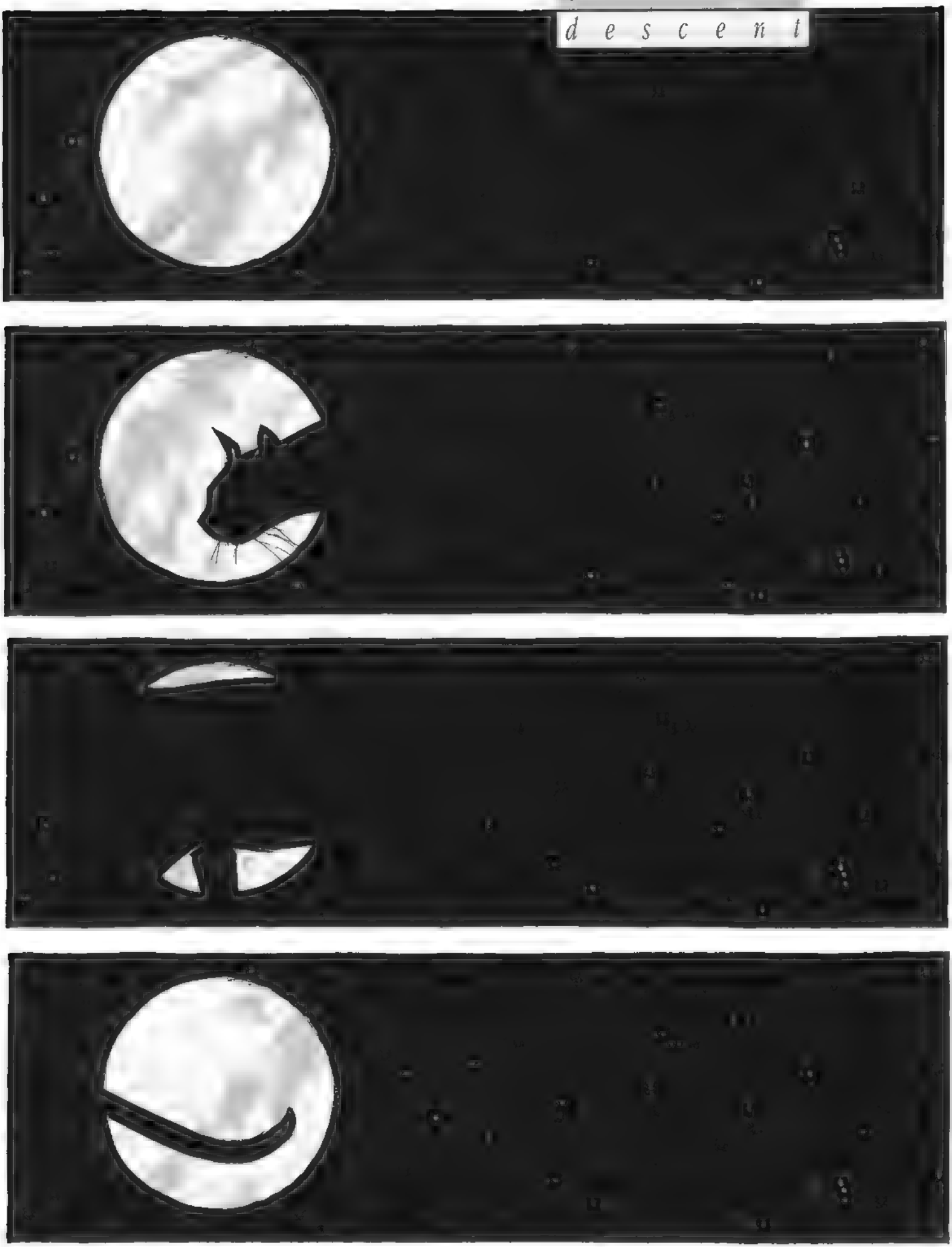
Time, a leaf, a life, a cloud, was forgotten.

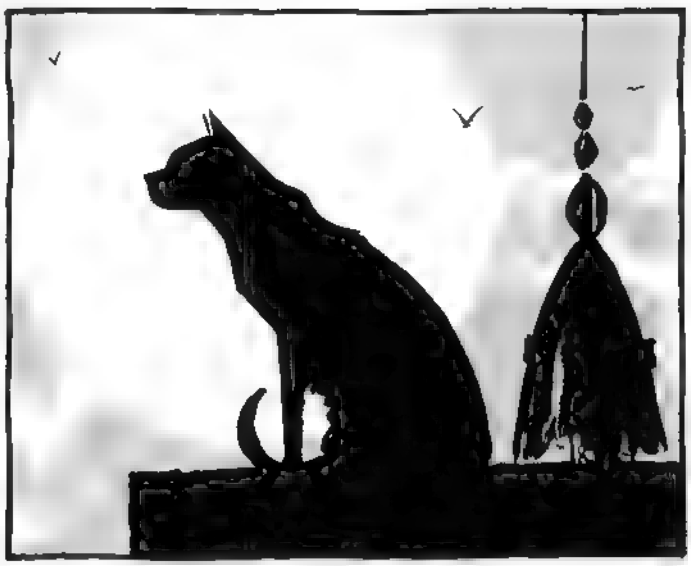
"WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?"
The cat ran along the causeway to where God was resting.
"WHAT THE HELL'S GOING ON! HAVE YOU SEEN WHAT THEY'RE DOING?" the cat screamed.
"Yes," said God, "Extraordinary isn't it?"
"WHAT? WHAT? YOU'RE JOKING! THIS IS A SICK JOKE, RIGHT?"
"They'll settle down, don't worry."
"[illegible]" shouted the cat, "THEY'RE [illegible]MALS, THE BIRDS, EVERYTHING! [illegible]ANTED, SURELY?"
[illegible]ions make it
[illegible]you want this.
[illegible]laughter!
[illegible]ANE!? Well, you can have it back!"
[illegible]turned on the cat. "You are ungrateful [illegible]unappreciative of my gift of life to you [illegible]and to hear your whining complaints [illegible]think of it, I'm tired of all of you!" [illegible]animals as one. "Your bland [illegible]take my gift of language from you [illegible]reminds you of the gifts you
[illegible]take his gift of speech from the animals with one simple thought.
Because He could.

Meanwhile, questions burned brighter than ever in the hearts of mankind. They looked for answers in power and fear, in lies and destruction.
Artists and writers created tactile insanities with the blood of warrior's victims.
And by the time God realised the ferocity of man's viciousness, they had closed around Him, calling for his perfect head on a stake.
"You've surprised me, my beautiful, tortured creatures," said God.
The clouds of man's rage encircled God and the warriors attacked.
God fled.
The love He held for His creations grew in strength, even as places to hide became further and fewer.
Finally, as man's pristine weapons drew blood, God was driven away from His world, leaving it a bruised and bloodied thing, smeared and into the blackness behind it, and leaving man utterly and perfectly alone.

the end

CHAPTER 1:
descent





Yo! Mr. Cat.
And how are you this fine, fine night.

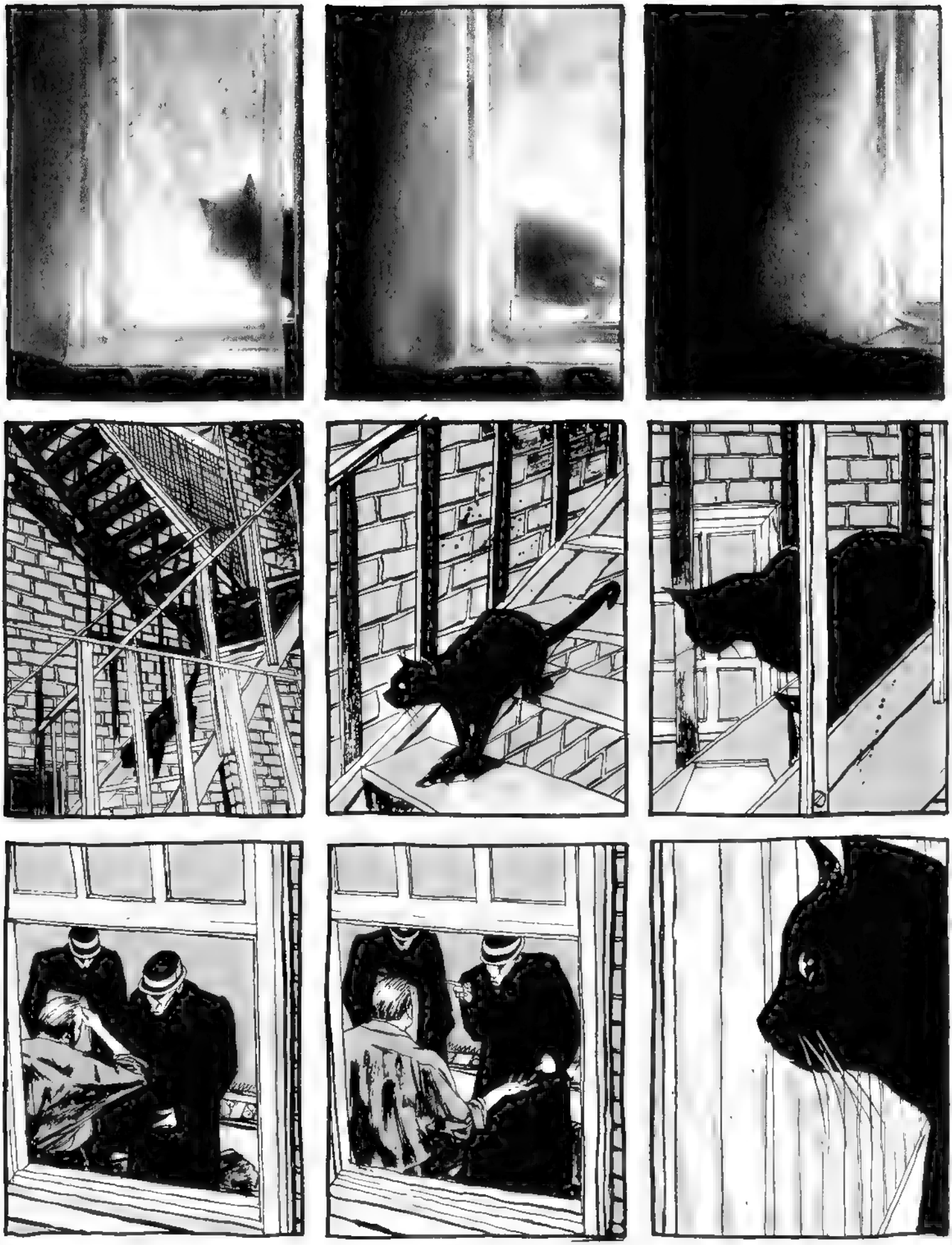
You really are de doziest great supine I never see, y'know
Eh? Mister Cat?
Nothin' wrong wit' that now.
But surely is a perfect raven of a night, Mr Cat
Don't it just feel like de start o' sometin'
Jus' look at all dem lickle stars, man

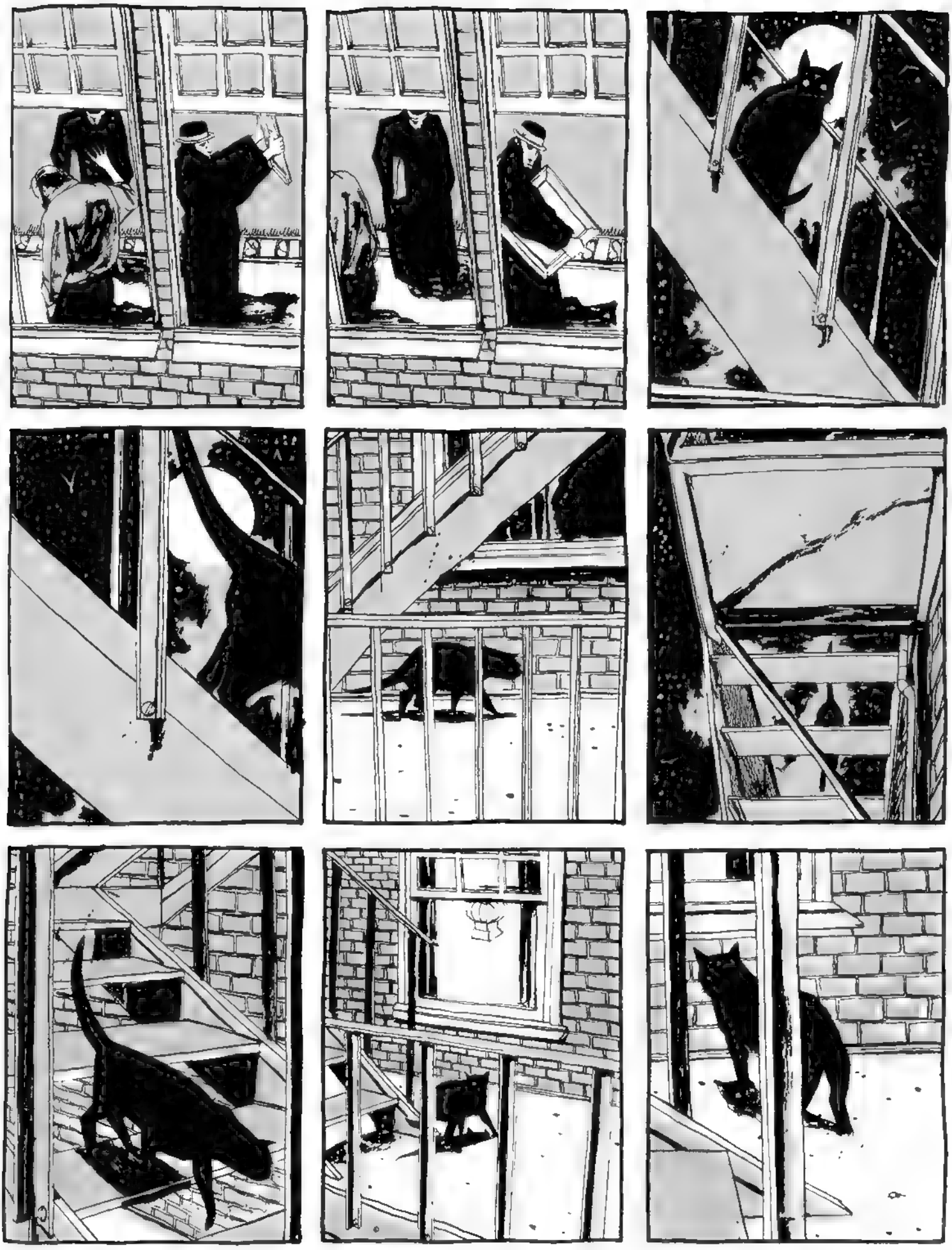
How many lickle star men and star cats is chattin' away up there d'ya think?
A million lickle voices from a billion lickle islands in a great swarthy black sea of a sky.
D'you think they're talkin' about us, now?
Hmm?
Life don't exactly tread on your tail, now does it Mister Cat?
Surely a 'appier cat never breathed a breath on this world
Hmm? This?
This a shakuhachi, Mr Cat

A hinstrument of such subtle and hillusive variation, that upon hearing its sweet song de birds stop singin' so as not to shame theyself, y'know
Heh, a doubting tomcat, eh?
Mister Doubting Tomcat?
Go steady now We'll see what dis night brings us, huh?

Christ
Give up, Sabarsky

Hello
again





KAW KAW
WHAT A BIGGER
WHAT A BIGGER
WHAT A BIGGER
KAW!
KAW KAW
Get away! Get away!
You filthy creature!

Hello.
Out on the hunt, huh?

Look I'm trying to find this address here
Here
Can you be of any help at all?
Perhaps?
I can see it's on the tip of your tongue
Oh, of course. Sorry you can't speak can you
Here, can you draw me a map

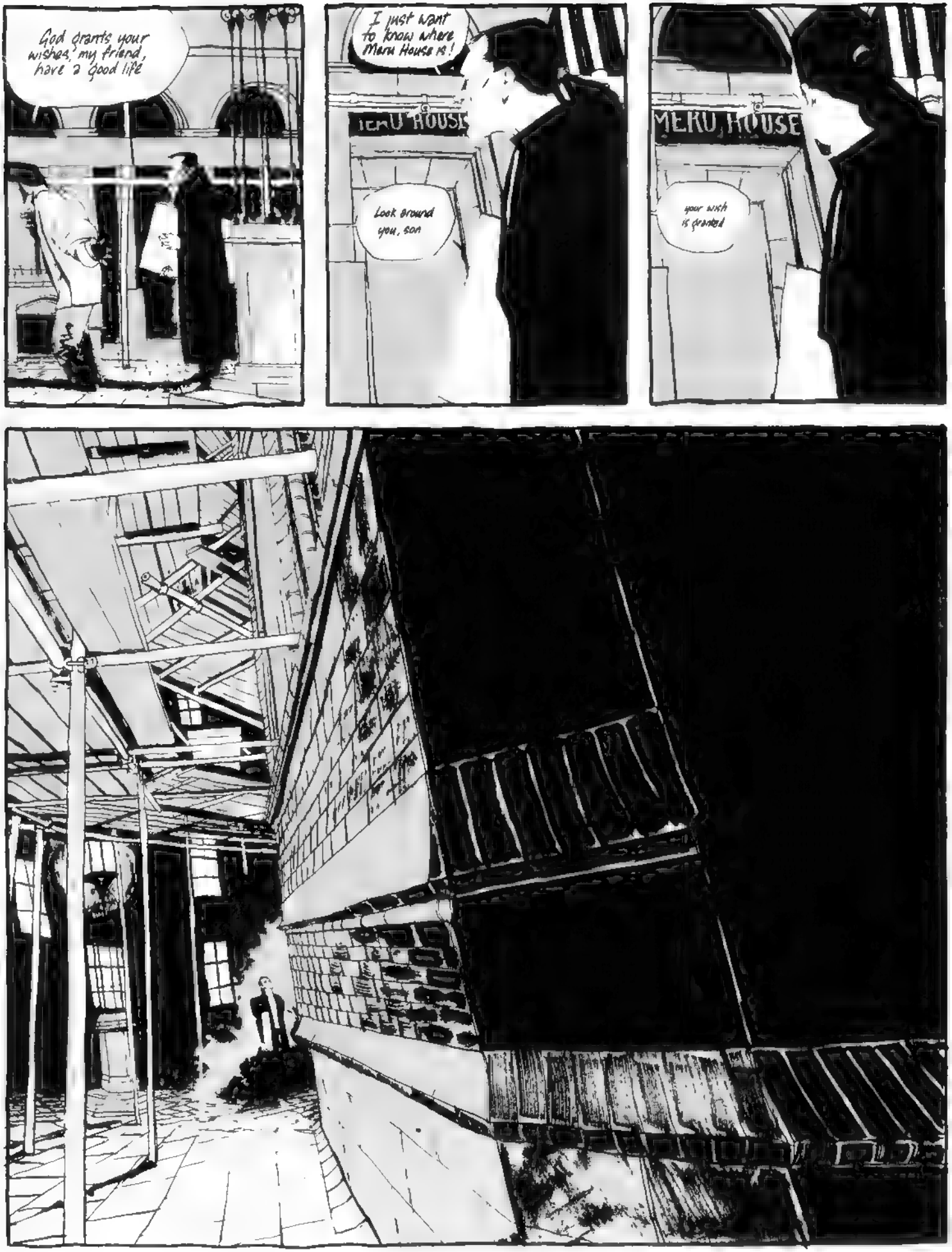
you!..
HELLO MY NAME IS JEFF
..are lost.
HELLO, MY NAME IS JEFFRE
Ah, yes I'm trying to find this building
I don't really think that's true, now is it?
Ahm, well yes I really am trying to find this building
But you don't know where you are now. Do you see the gist of the point I'm making
oh dear
I know where you are
HELLO MY NAME IS JEFF

Uh huh. go on then
You're riiiight
...HERE!
Are you sure you're allowed out on your own?
Don't you see?
How tiny we are? How we are all just prawns in God's great chess game of existence.
I'm not a prawn
You are! You are! You're a prawn!
He's a prawn I'm a prawn, we are all of us. prawns.

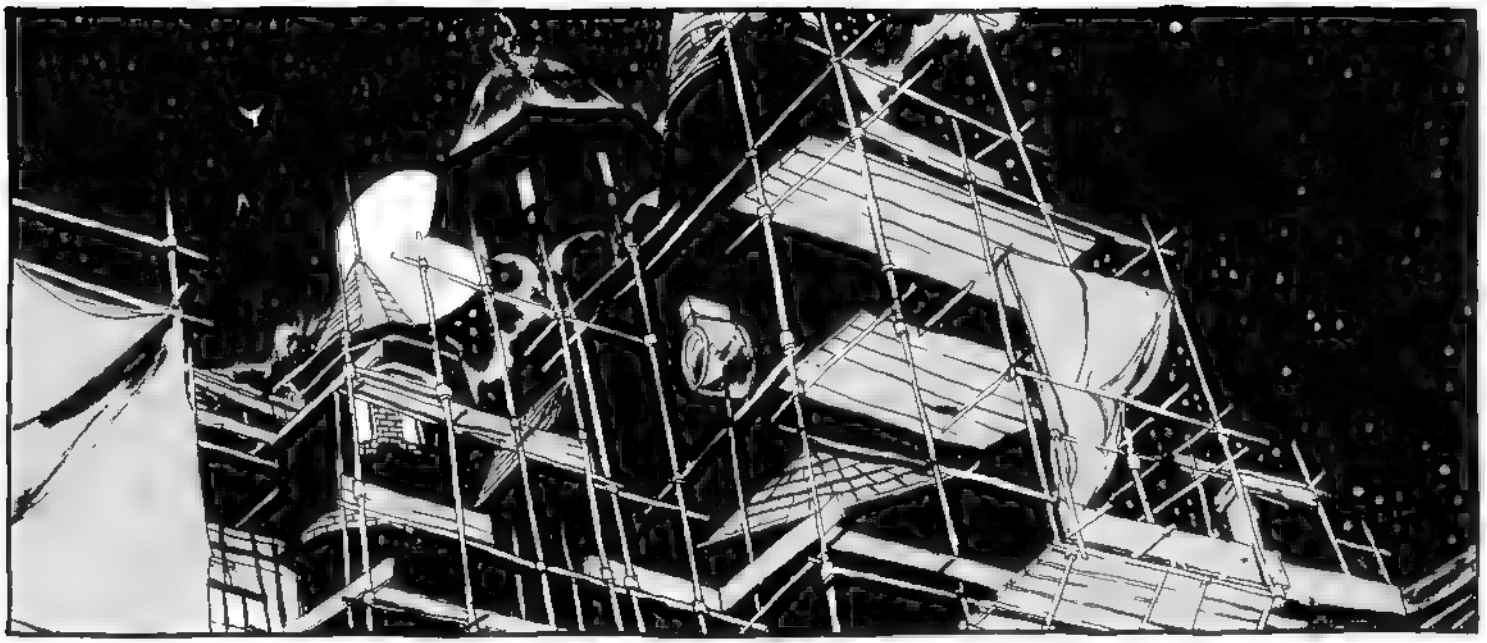
I can assure you, and I have medical records to back this up, that I am not a prawn
Ah, but even though we are such tiny and small and tiny things, crawling on our bellies in this vast and huge chess game .. and GREAT .. chess game of existence...
You're not going to tell me where this address is, are you?
... even then, God still gives us the key to what it's all about.
He does?
Certainly, certainly, and I have it here in my pocket.
HELLO MY NAME IS JEFFR
HELLO MY NAME IS JEFFREY
Oh shit!
What's up?
I'm sure I put it in these trousers.

Oh bugger.
Where did you last have it?
Maybe it's in my other trousers
I'll just nip home and get it, I won't be long
What does it look like?
I won't be long
'bye bye Jeffrey
'e's got a tongue in 'im, that 'n
Now meself, I'm a straight talker
I can't be doin' with all this dootalyin' around, talkin' an' talkin' an not sayin a soddin' thing

What do you want?
Well exactly. I mean, what do any of us want?
A roof over our weary heads, a place to rest our tired eyes
A bite to eat. Nothin' fancy y'understand. Just a crust an' a swig and an easin' of the hunger
A bit of companionship. Maybe somethin' to be workin' at
A sense of identity, a spiritual identity. Oh, it's all very well bein fed an' watered an' havin a good shag occasionally what about the soul, son?
Man's got to feel somethin' here, y'know?
Price of a cup of tea?
Ahh, youre a saint an' a saviour, sir


God grants your wishes, my friend, have a good life
I just want to know where Meru House is!
Look around you, son
MERU HOUSE
your wish is granted

CHAPTER 2:
ascent



CA

CA

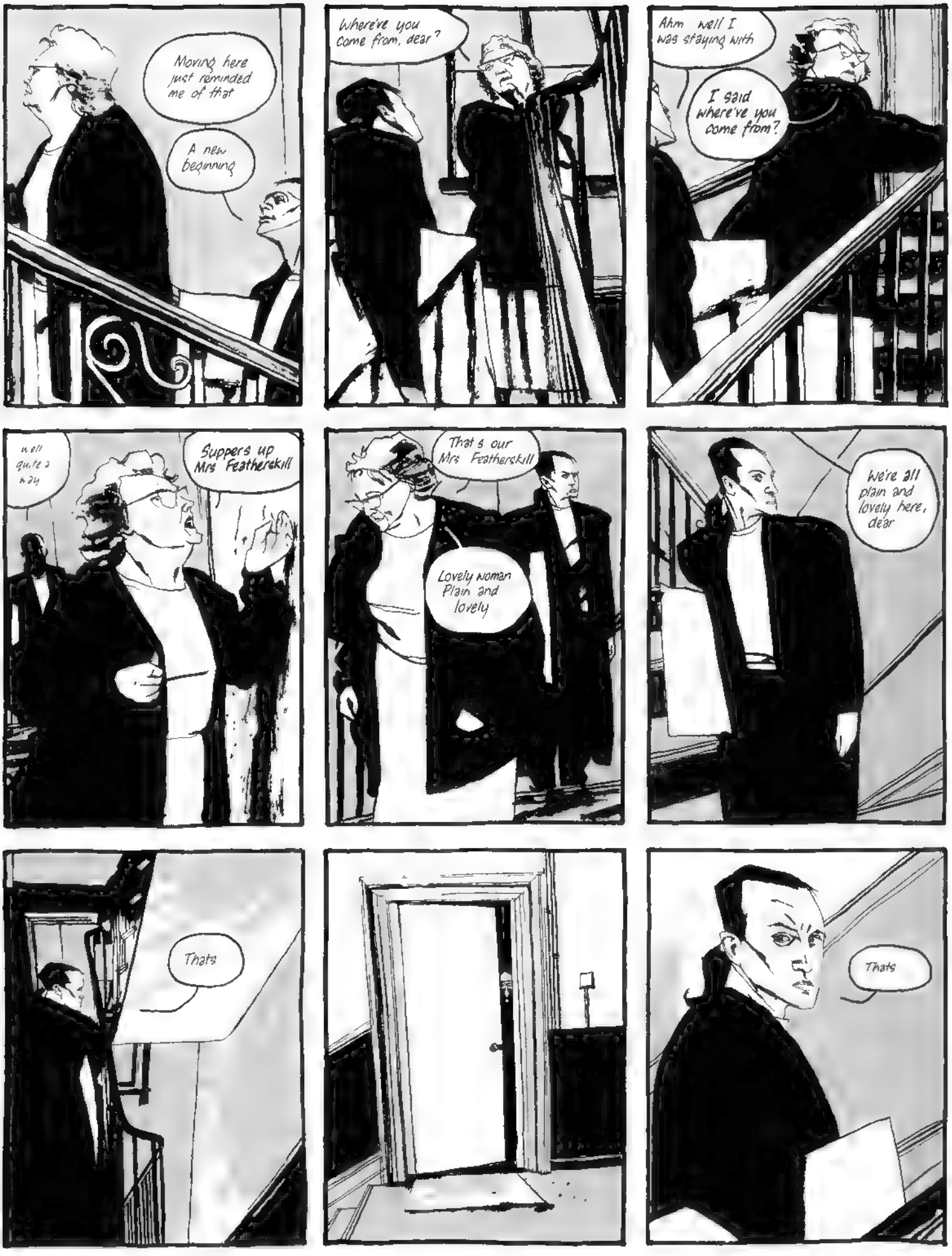
what?

Hello?
Hello?
What?
Hello, my name is Leo Saborsky. I'm taking room erm
Hang on I have a card
What?
Hang on
I can't hear you, the partition's down
Well ahm do you want to open the partition

I'll have to open it
erm okay
what?
Ahh I just said ahm
Well you'll have to wait, there's a pigeon
what?
Impatience impatience! Impatience you know is not a virtue!
No, patience is a virtue

No, hang on, "not" a virtue you were right, Sorry
WHAT?
Ahm, my name's Leo Sabarsky I'm staying in apartment six
There's a pidgeon, I have to feed the pidgeon
I understand
I'll just go up
What?
I'll just go up to the room then

I'll take you up to your room in a sec, dear
Well fine, okay
"She scraped these fragments together and made a small round muddy ball"
"This" she said, "is the world"
They'll put you in a booby coop talkin' to yourself like that
No no I was it's just a story I remember
Not one of them I,I,I stories
Can't abide them
Erm no it was about starting over from scratch sort of thing


Moving here just reminded me of that
A new beginning
Where've you come from, dear?
Ahm well I was staying with
I said where've you come from?
well quite a way
Suppers up Mrs Featherskill
That's our Mrs Featherskill
Lovely woman Plain and lovely
We're all plain and lovely here, dear
Thats
Thats

what?
Oh yes, have my cases arrived yet?
your stuff arrived last night, dear
Has it?
what?
My cases arrived
That's what I just said
Do pay attention, dear
I've only got one lung

Interesting
I'm sorry
Two lads brought everything up last night
Can't go repeating everything, I say
Wearing meself out

Puffing and blowing like a couple of pigeons. they were
Anyway, I gave them a cuppa and they soon chippered up
That's good
What?
Good That's good
Here we are then, dear
I've got the thingey here somewhere
Now let's see Mr Easel isn't it?
Pardon ?
It's a month in advance, less the deposit

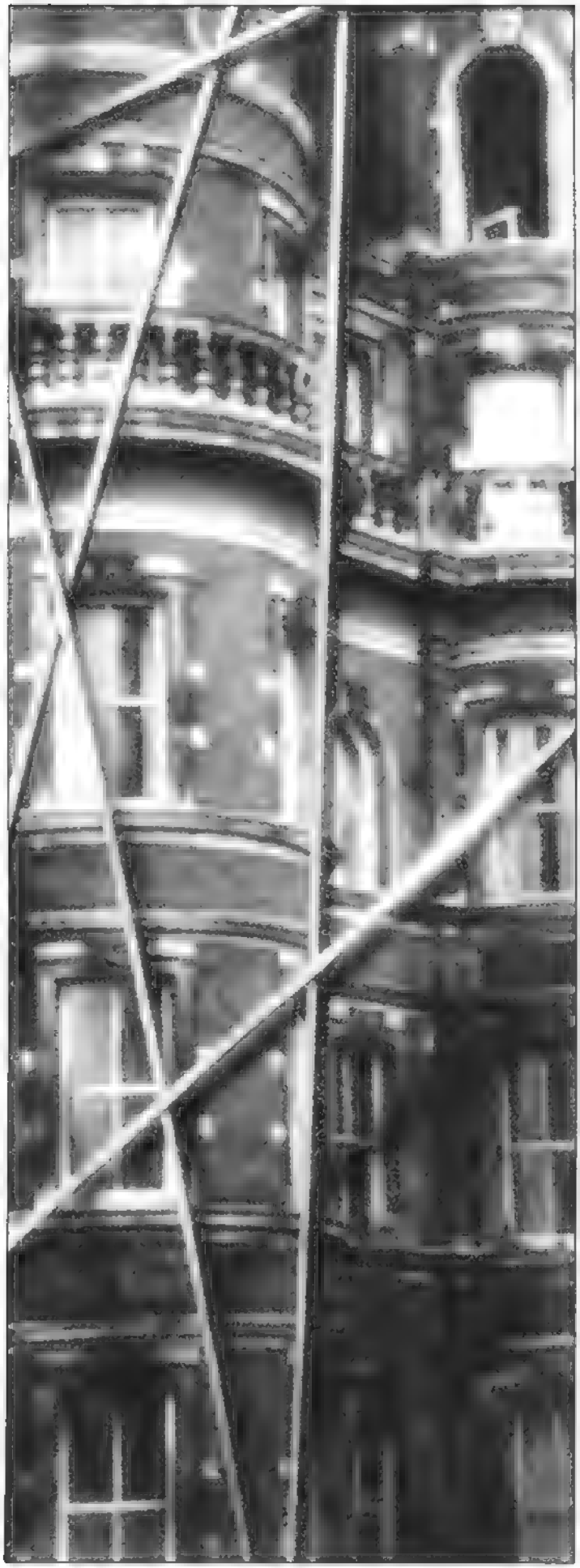
My names Sabarsky. Leo Sabarsky
What?
My name Leo Sabarsky
Well where's Mr Easel then?
I think that's the description of the
Look, I've got a room for a Mr Easel I can't let anybody in
I think..look that's me there
If you're not who you're supposed to be well, that's no good, is it?
We can't go around not being the right people, otherwise well, what's life all about anyway?
It's okay that's me there
'Mr Sabarsky'
So who's this, then?

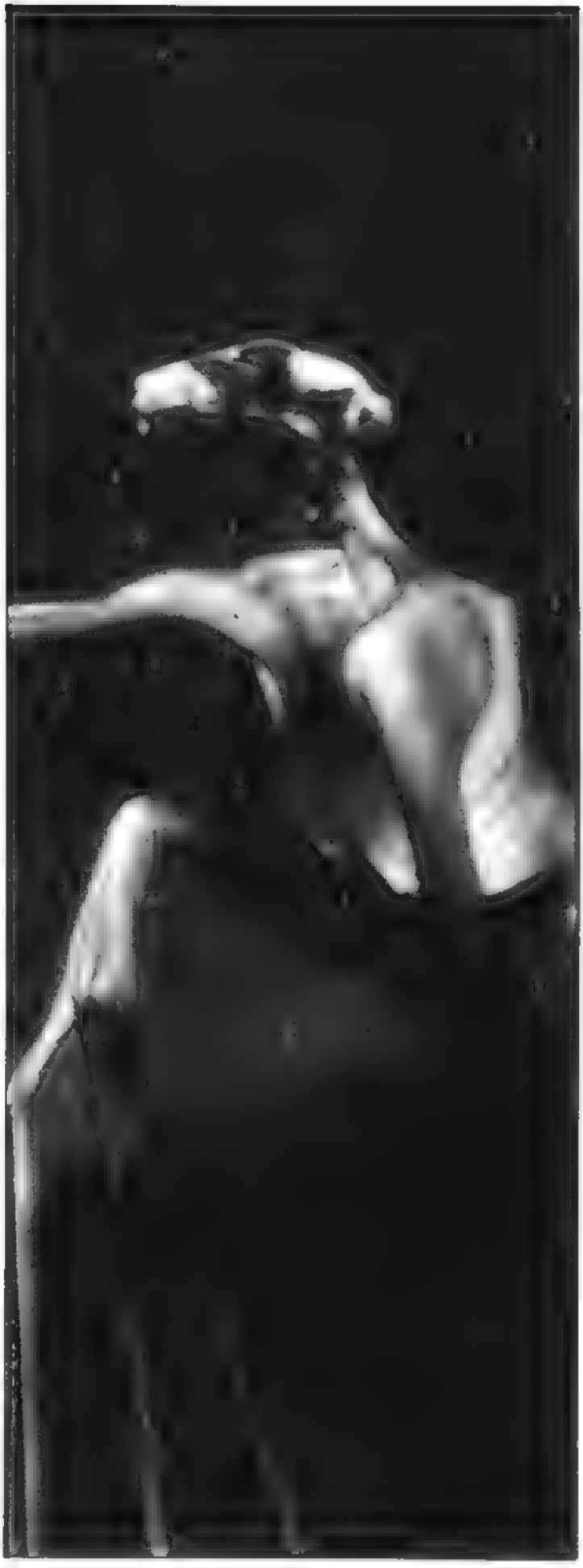
That says 'Master Easel'
This is the same docket I filled out for the removals people
Master Easel, small easel, six packing cases, chest of drawers, dum-de-dum, see? Master Easel
It's a big easel
I paint
well I suppose that's alright then
But if Mr Easel wants his room, it'll be your liability

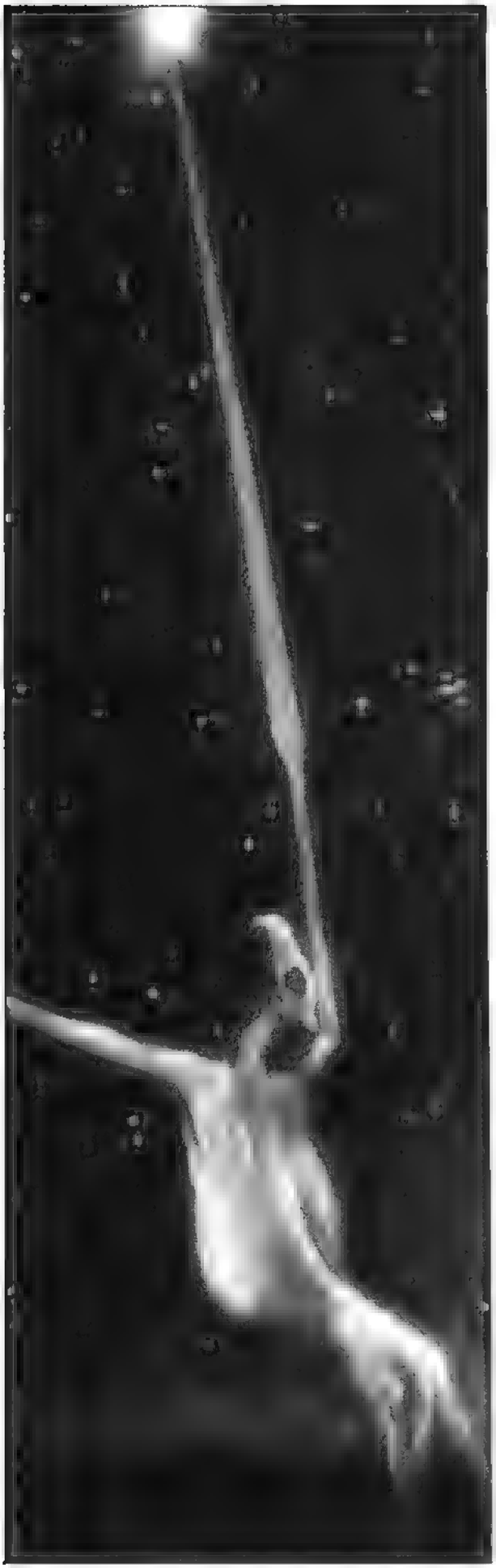
No problem
Honestly worries and bothers
I've got more headaches than a pigeon without you hugger-mugging me
Pigeons with headaches
What?
Nothing
Well here we are
You know the only ones I don't like are those 'I, I, I' stories
Oh yes?

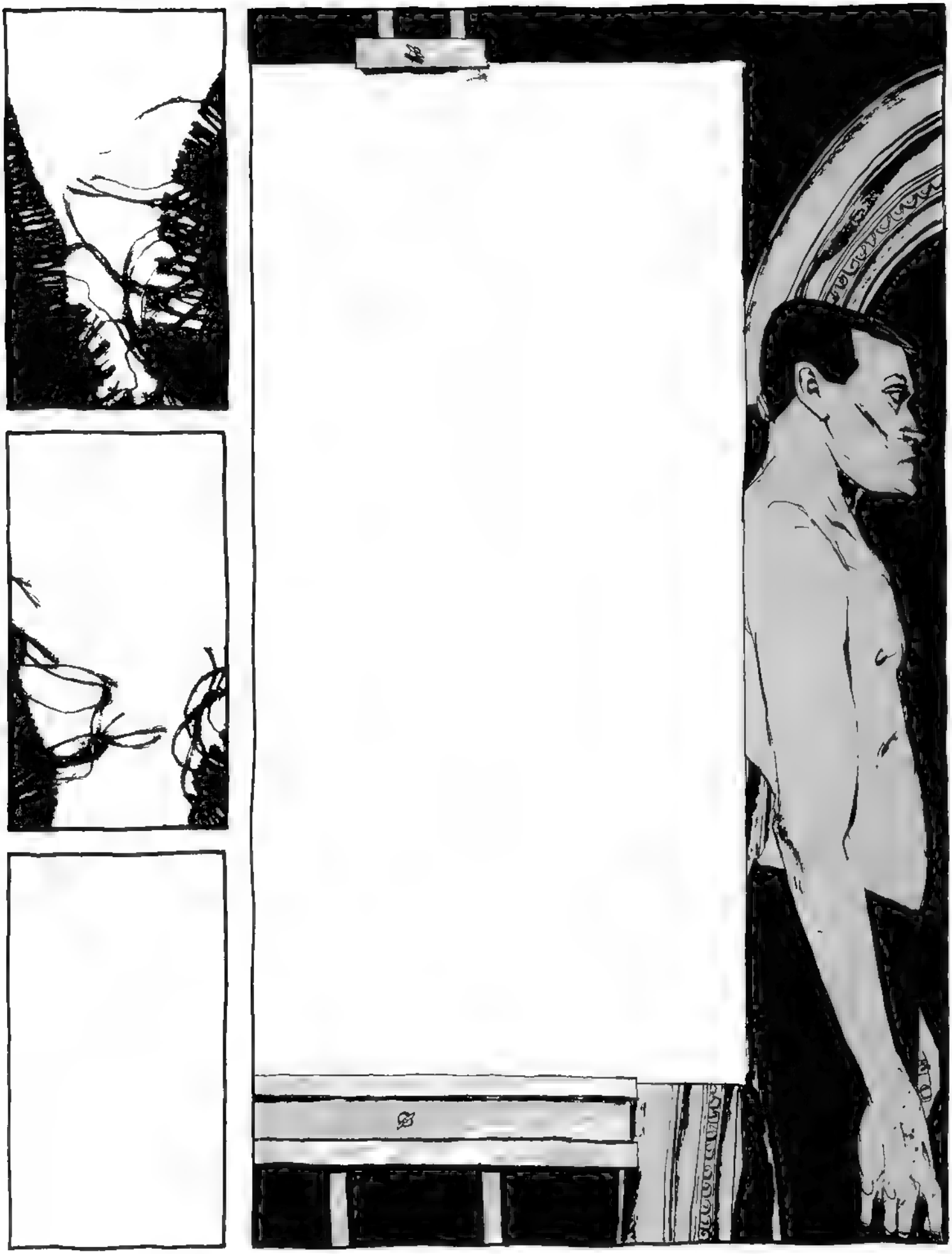
No, I do like a good narrator
A story's not a story for me unless it starts 'once upon a time' and ends 'Happy ever after'
I agree
Oh well, Mrs Featherskill will think I've flown away without getting her supper
Uh-huh
I'll leave you to get settled in
Here's your key on the side
See you later, pet

CHAPTER 3:
drawing a blank







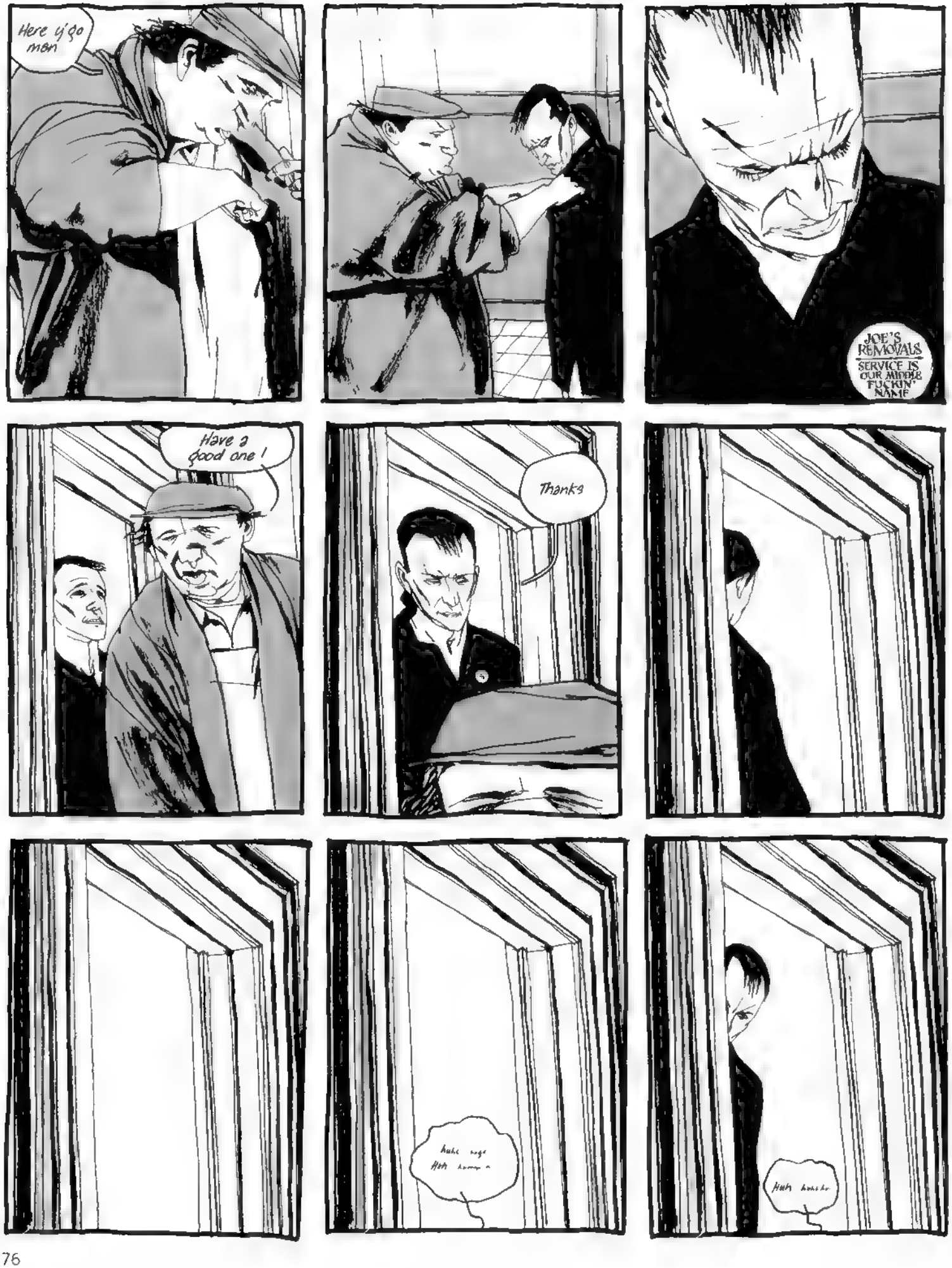


Jesus!
KNOCK KNOCK
Yoo hoo
Just a minute.
What?
I wonder who that could be?
Yoo hoo Mr. Sabbath

Mr Sabbath
Sabarsky
Sabarthy
Barsky
Barky ?
Close enough
What can I do for you Mrs What ?
What ?
Indeed Come in

I just popped up to tell you they're bringing the rest of your things up
Oh great, I'll give them a hand By the way
Yes dear?
Where'd all the scaffolding go?
All the what dear?
KNOCK KNOCK
Yo' I gotta eight-be-six anna two-be-three for a Sabarsky.
up
That's me Come in
Yo Jonah! Up here okay?!
Tell me about it! Always on the top fuckin' floor, huh?

Can I help?
What, we can't do our fuckin' jobs now?
No, no, I just thought.
Yeah well just think this okay?
Think?
Sign, sign! what am I, a fuckin' coffeetable? I got stuff to move an' it's half past the fuckin' hour already!
Jonah, they ain't no fuckin' ex-calators man, you gotta walk up the fuckin' things!
And there
I'll see you downstairs Mr Barky
Yes, okay Mrs um
And there
So that's everything is it?
Everyfuckinthing. Soon as Jonah shakes his FUCKIN' LEG!

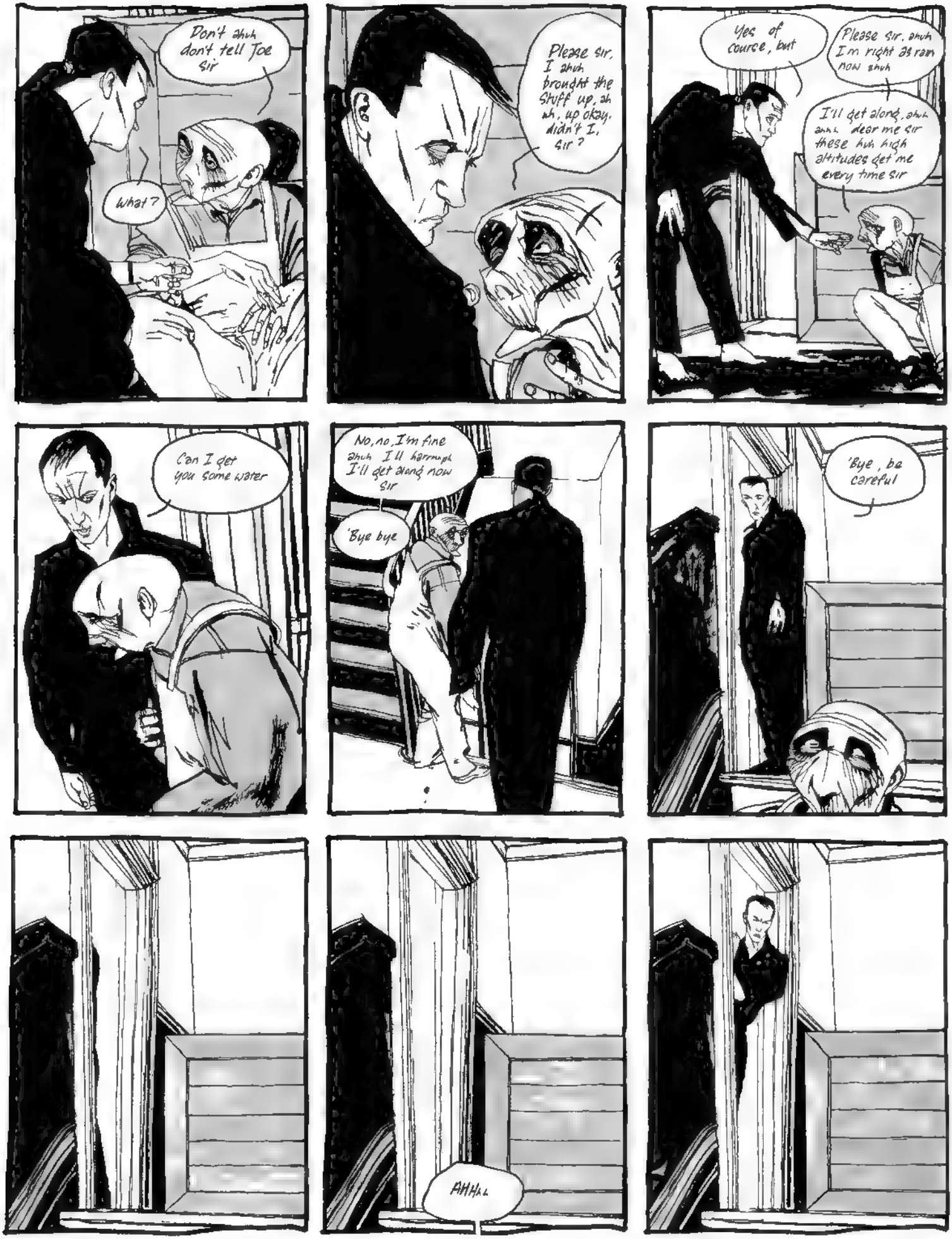

Here y'go mon
JOE'S REMOVALS
SERVICE IS OUR MIDDLE FUCKIN' NAME
Have a good one!
Thanks

UP
Hello?
Hhh ughuh hello yes hah
UP
Oh jesus, let me take it
UP
NO Hah, no hnh, I can manage huhh, huh
Are you sure? It's heavy
NO I insist. hunh, AHH Quite huh, light really

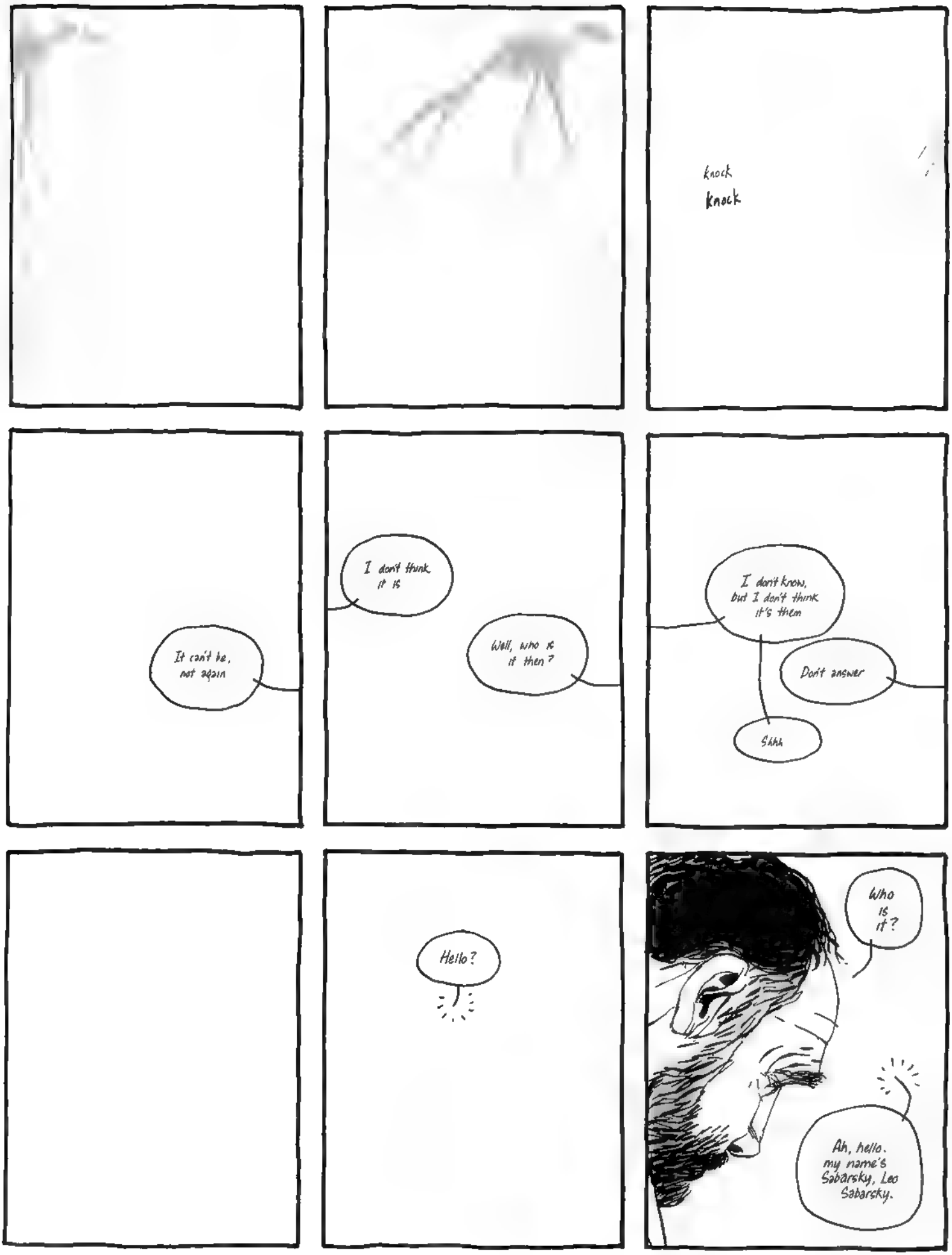
Well if it's
AHH, huh
What? What?
Nothing sir nothing Just hhhh catching my breath, hah
I've got to give you a hand
NO Please huh, more'n my job's worth huh hah
Hnn, huhhh. nearly there uhn
AHH...
Jesus
LEAB ID! Leab id! Mnnnh
I can take it
BO! I IDSISD. Mnnn JUD BRETED I'B NOD 'ERE. SIR Hnnnn
Hnn, mnngh Hnhungh nng.

Hnngh there we go, sir huh
Christ, are you okay?
Freh hun, freh hah hngh fresh as a daisy sir
AHHnngh!
Oh shit, what?
Pih'
What? What?
Pih'
Pih?
Pock hngh
Pocket? Yes?

This?
Yih'
Pills, pills, you want a pill?!
Pih'
Heh, huh hahhh. Nngh Hahh... thak thank you Sir.. thank you
Why are you doing this?! What is this, a heart pill? Jesus!
Hah, huh me? heart? HA, HAH. no, huh no, no yes
Are you okay?


Don't ahuh don't tell Joe sir
What?
Please sir, I ahuh brought the stuff up, ah uh, up okay, didn't I, sir?
Yes of cource, but
Please sir, ahuh I'm right as rain now ahuh
I'll get along, ahuh ahuh dear me sir these huh high altitudes get me every time sir
Can I get you some water
No, no, I'm fine ahuh I'll harrrugh I'll get along now sir
'Bye bye
'Bye, be careful
AHHhh

Oh jesus
Don't ahah don't you worry sir Just a little ahuh trip sir Occupational hazard y'know
Here
No, no I'm fine
Are you 'landscapin' a fuckin' garden up there or what?
Just coming. 'Bye sir


knock
knock
It can't be, not again
I don't think it is
Well, who is it then?
I don't know, but I don't think it's them
Don't answer
Shhh
Hello?
Who is it?
Ah, hello. my name's Sabarsky, Leo Sabarsky.

Hello?
What do you want Mr. Sabarsky
Ahm . well I just moved in upstairs . yesterday I moved in, and I was wondering if I could borrow a cup of sugar
please.
And what would you want with sugar, Mr. Sabarsky?
Ahmm .. well, I'd like to make some tea.
I only have the wine that I packed to bring with me, and I don't know where the shops are yet, so I'd really like to borrow some sugar so I could have some tea.
I see.
And some milk
And milk ?
Well, and some teabags too, but don't worry, I've got the water and the cup.
Uh huh
Oh hang on, no I haven't, I'll take a cup as well if I could?

Okay, the sugar was a ruse
A ruse
The concierge told me you were a writer this morning when I was sorting out my room
So, I wanted to say hello, and introduce [illegible] you go, the sugar was a ruse.
Heh come in
Jonathan .
It's okay.
I'm sorry were in a bit of a mess, Mr Sabarsky
Leo
Leo
You know, you remind me of somebody
I have one of those faces

No, you definitely remind me of somebody
Erm do you want a drink, Leo?
Sure thanks
This is a nice room
Nice and airy
lots of
space
We got tired of looking at the same old stuff
Hah yes well
I'll get the tea
Great great

Jesus
Those eyes
So, do you work in the area, Leo?
No, I came here to do some painting and drawing and stuff. I needed a change
You don't know anywhere around here that might be interesting? I wanted to sketch people mostly
I ..I don't really know the area that well I think there's a club across the street, that seems quite popular.
Oh great I'll check it out Hey, I know who you are
CASES
CABLES
I knew I recognised you. I actually drew you once I remember your eyes Christ, well that's proof that when you draw it's one of the few times you really pay attention

That was another life, Leo.
Hey, you know. I've even got it here. Can I give it to you? It's the least I can do, you've given me so much with these books
Leo, I
I won't be a minute.
Here you go, God, talk about small world
Well, what do you think?
I
I like it
Well. live with it a bit, if you can't bear it, chuck it out.
Thank you, Leo
Heyyy, 'Rhetorical Conversations', I love this book.
You've read that?

Yeah, well it was read to me. My father died when I was young, so I had this aunt who used to come over and help out. Aunt Phoebe, and she would read to me from this book. My God, I haven't thought about her for years.
I'll get that drink.
Hmm? Oh yeah, great.
Aunt Phoebe. She was a total fruitcake. She loved the book so much because she used to talk to things too.
When we went shopping, she used to ask all the things she liked how they were, and if they minded being bought. She said she didn't want to break up any friendships that might have formed between the fruit and veg at the grocers.
Really?
Oh yes. Shopping used to take a good six or seven hours with Aunt Phoebe.
I can imagine.
She once got thrown out of a fishmongers for picking a fight with a mackerel.
Was it dead?
Very.
She said it made remarks about her posture, or something.
I don't think my mother approved of her being around really, but I thought she was great. It was like she'd created her own world. Imagine being able to ask a tree what it's like to be a tree.
It sounds like she was very lonely.

Heh
I guess she was
Her husband died around the same time as my father. I think that's how my mother came to know her well.
Mutual Support
He was an odd one too. He used to run this pet place I remember my dad talked me into wanting a dog because that's what boys want Boys want dogs.
I wanted a trumpet as far as I can remember, but it looked like it was the dog or nothing. So we went along to see my uncle.
And he ran this bizarre place where you don't choose the dog you want, they choose the dog they think will suit you
Sounds like an ingenious way of getting rid of faulty dogs.
Absolutely. My dad was convinced they only had the one dog, and we went through the elaborate interview ritual, at the end of which my uncle said, "I've got just the dog for you," and they bring out their one and only animal
Anyway, we talked to my uncle for about an hour "I've got just the dog for you," he says, and out comes this absurd set of paws with a dog attached called 'Lemon'.

Lemon?
Yes. We had a dog called Lemon.
Was the name appropriate?
Yes, it was a total and complete lemon.
We had it about three hours. It demolished the kitchen and took out the bannisters.
It ate our dinner and then started on the electrics. My dad decided to rename the dog 'Doom'. Doom the dog.
My mother offered the name 'Unfortunate' as a compromise, but then after it ate his briefcase, he lost it completely and took it back.
God. I'd love to read this again.
You want to borrow it?
Could I? I know it's precious.
Heh. I don't know why I keep that stuff really.
Are you serious? I realise it's a long way from 'Cages', but it's still valid.
I was young and stupid. I thought I knew everything.
It was an impressive debut.
It was pretentious drivel. If there was ever anything valid there, it was trivialised by superficial, stylistic veneer.

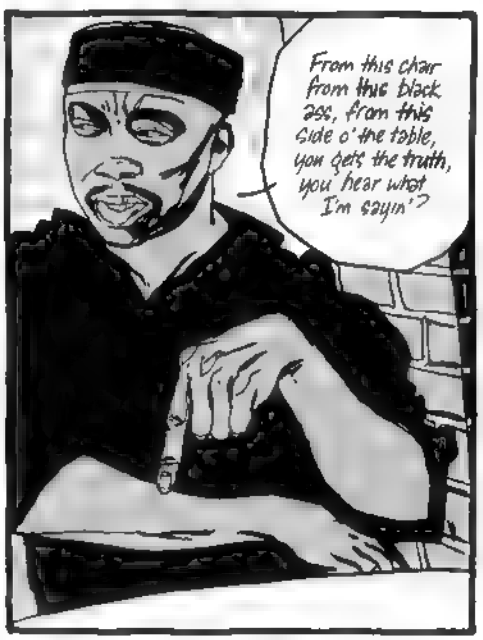
Well I liked it.
I'm sorry I'm not putting you down if you got some enjoyment out of it, that's nice.
What are you working on now
Oh, I'm not really writing anymore. I'm a bitter old sod. Who wants to read the ramblings of a bitter old sod An occasional review, that's about it
They send me these books Review copies. Look at this stuff.
Do you read them all?
No. Good God no. I pick out the ones that look like they at least have a spark to them. The others ..
To the others I give new life
Jesus! What are you doing!
A book is a beautiful thing, Leo.
I mean its form, its pages. For a life to end in order to create these pages, there's a responsibility to fill them with ideas. It's the only thing we can do to give life back to them.
These are spoilt, mutilated, suffering things, Leo.
GAY Bachelor

So I at least give them a function. Put them out of their misery.
What's the matter?
I... really, I just hate seeing books burned there's just something monstrous about the image.
Please excuse my husband, mr Sabersky. We rarely have visitors, so when we do my husband likes to put on a show. The visionary writer revolutionary.
Hah hah my wife is right Leo, I apologise. Tell us, what are you working on here?
Hah, yes. well, trying to sort out my life is what I've been working on
I've been promising myself a break for years, and then suddenly, it's here
Now.
It's like... I got in last night and sorted the room out and everything and then I see the easel. All set up.
And it struck me that, okay I've whined and complained for years about this stupid little box I've found myself working in..
... you know how quick people are to pigeon-hole you, and how I need to just get away and just play. Re-focus. You know?

So I was looking at this canvas, and I pulled the sheet off it.
... and just. stared at this immense white surface, and realised.
this is it.
I can do anything. The possibilities are limitless. I am the beginning and the end of it.
And I wondered what the first line would be, and how it would move, and what colour, and what shape
And I felt absolutely bloody terrified.
Hah, heh fear of freedom, Leo
Everybody's a bird, locked up in a pretty cage Sometimes you fly to a slightly bigger one, but you never quite have the courage to abandon captivity completely

Jus' what the fuck are you tellin' me man? What, three-four's better'n four-four? What the fuck is that?

Hey, you can shake yo' shabby ass 'til the Friday befo' the Flood,man, ain't gonna mean a God-damn thing


From this chair from this black ass, from this side o' the table, you gets the truth, you hear what I'm sayin'?

An' what choo sayn ? That three-four's bettern four-four
Yeah !
You shittin me'
Damn straight, man
Damn straight you shittin' me They're fuckin' time signatures man, how can one be bettern the other?
Hey ! Mout'n Trousers
Give us a break, huh ? the Angel's playin'

Heyyyy cool set Angel
You guys gon' t'be playin' tomorrow, now?
I gonna be playin'man, these roaches gonna be blowin' in my wake, guy
Hey, who you callin' a fuckin' roach man? You an' that bogus extemporary shit.
Boop, widdley widdley poop.
poddle oddle wheeeep
.. man even the folks who like that shit don't like it

I gotta play, I check you guys later, okay?
See ya Angel.
Stay cool, man.
So what's this jive ya' givin' me now man? I play 'the new'. You fuckin' scared o' the new'.
Man I ain't scared o' nothin', 'specially not no widdle, widdle shit
You can't cut it man, You play your folksy street jazz, you ain't never gonna elivate the music above your own sorry ass
You ain't got the technique, you ain't got the understandin', an' that's why you scared man, scared you gonna get found out
Now what kind of asinine bullshit is that?

You can feel safe under all them fas' notes man, but when it come to emotion man, you ain't even on the same planet, yun'erstan' what I'm sayin'?
You out there on planet fuckin' widdle, man
Jus' shut the fuck up, okay?
You boys are as bad as each other How many God-damn times are you gonna go through this sorry shit?
You know damn well there's as much emotion in his modern orchestral stuff as there is in good jazz
Jus' 'cos you can't cut the dots, don't pay that philistine, lowest-common denominator shit
An' you! You soundin' more like one a' them dumb-ass white college kid critics that go on about, "Oh those negroes, they grew up in such a heathen type fashion, they're so earthy
denegratin' jazz to some folk art, you should know better.

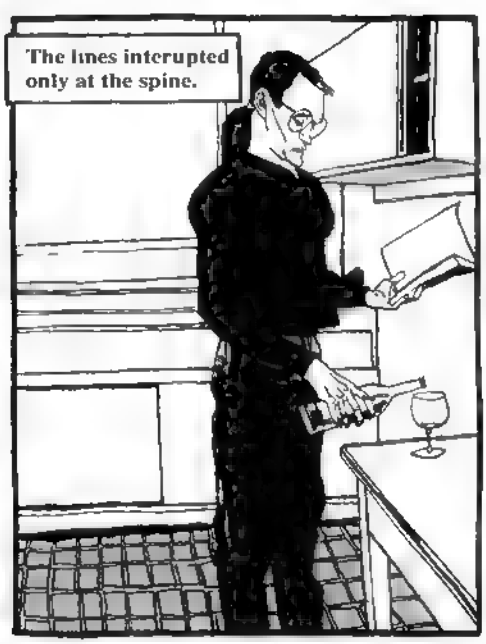
So jus' shut the fuck up an' listen to the Angel. You both might learn somethin'

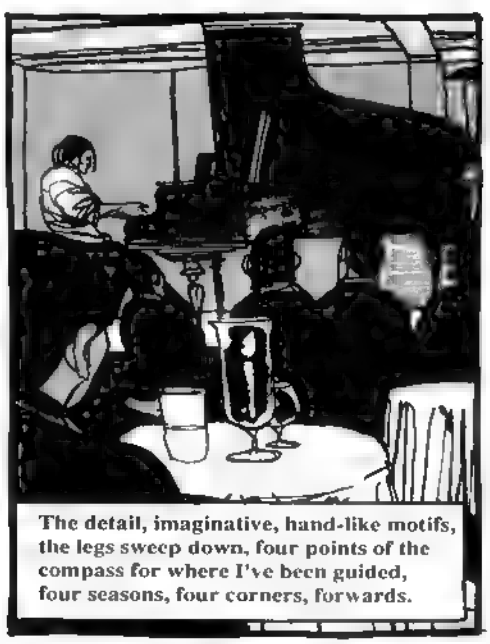
RHETORICAL CONVERSATION
for INANIMATE OBJECTS
and IMPROBABLE PEOPLE

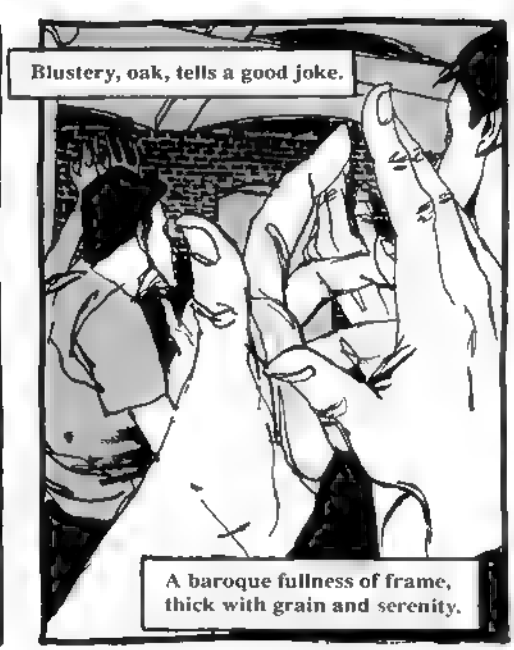
Dedication.

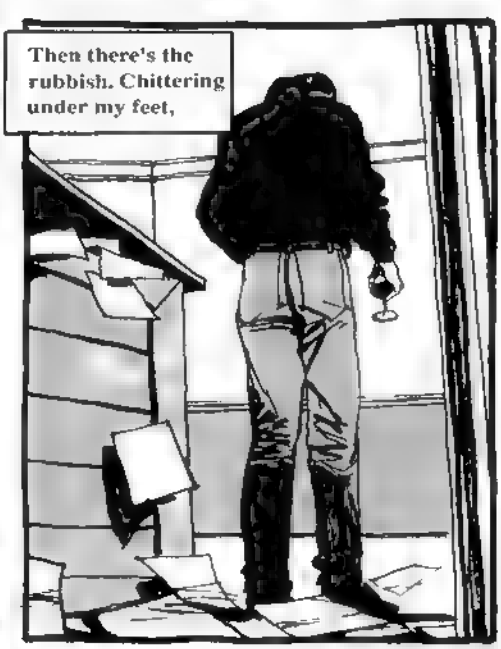
Of course my chair.

Primary, plain, high backed,

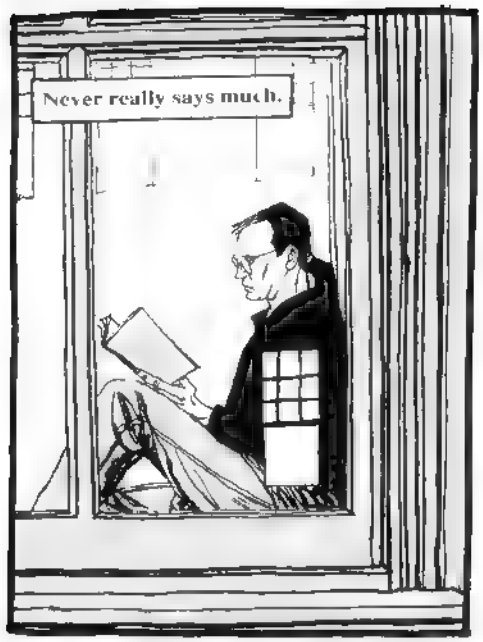


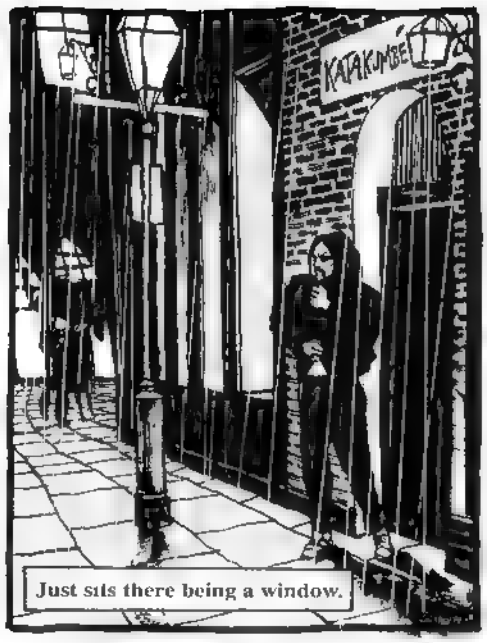

The detail, imaginative, hand-like motifs, the legs sweep down, four points of the compass for where I've been guided, four seasons, four corners, forwards.

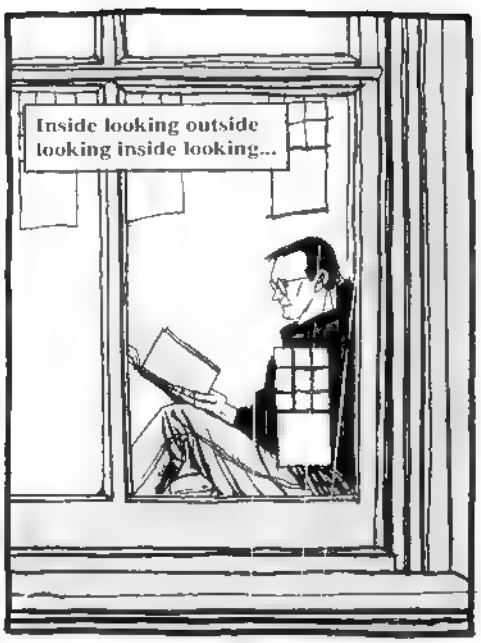




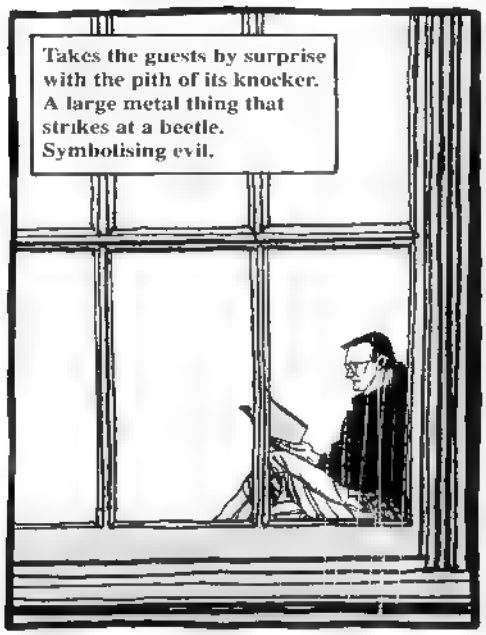
chattering behind my back.
Ambient words as pieces of paper,
aimlessly floating, sometimes they whisper,
to me.
So thank you my tattletits, scuttlebutts and babblers,
fabulists, fritterers, wastrals and blatherskites.
I love you all, my Judas town cryers.
And then there's my window.
A bit monotonous, my window.


Never really says much.

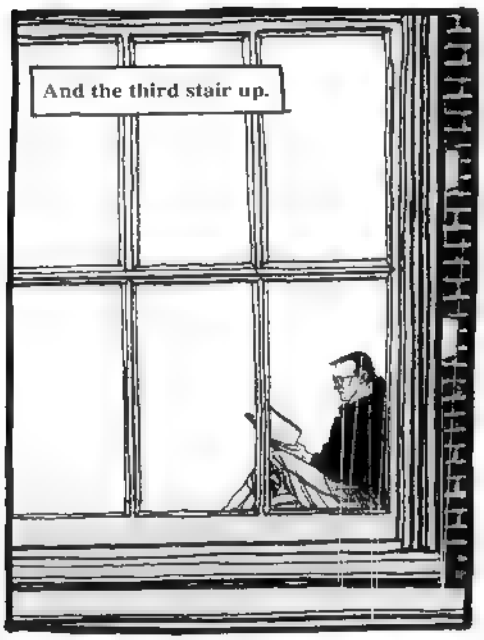

KATAKUMBE
Just sits there being a window.

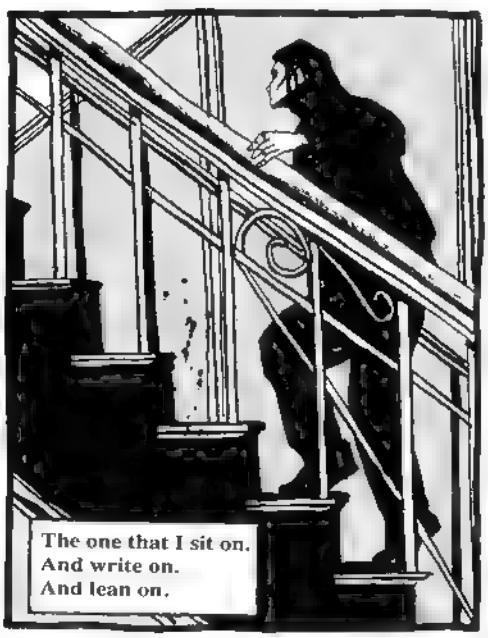

Inside looking outside
looking inside looking...

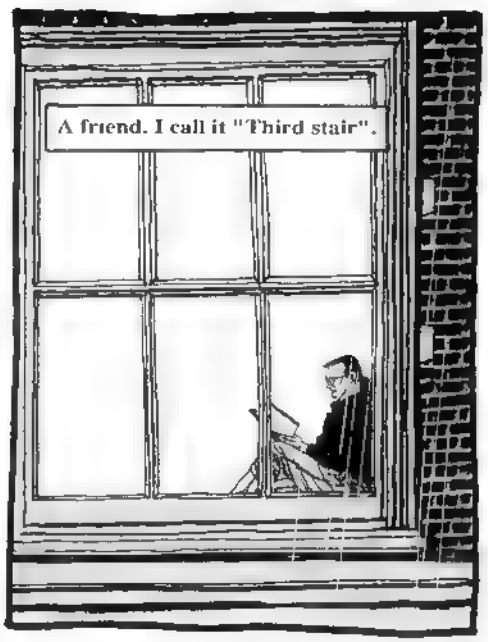
Oh but my door.


Takes the guests by surprise
with the pith of its knocker.
A large metal thing that
strikes at a beetle.
Symbolising evil.

The guest punishes the louse
before entering my house.

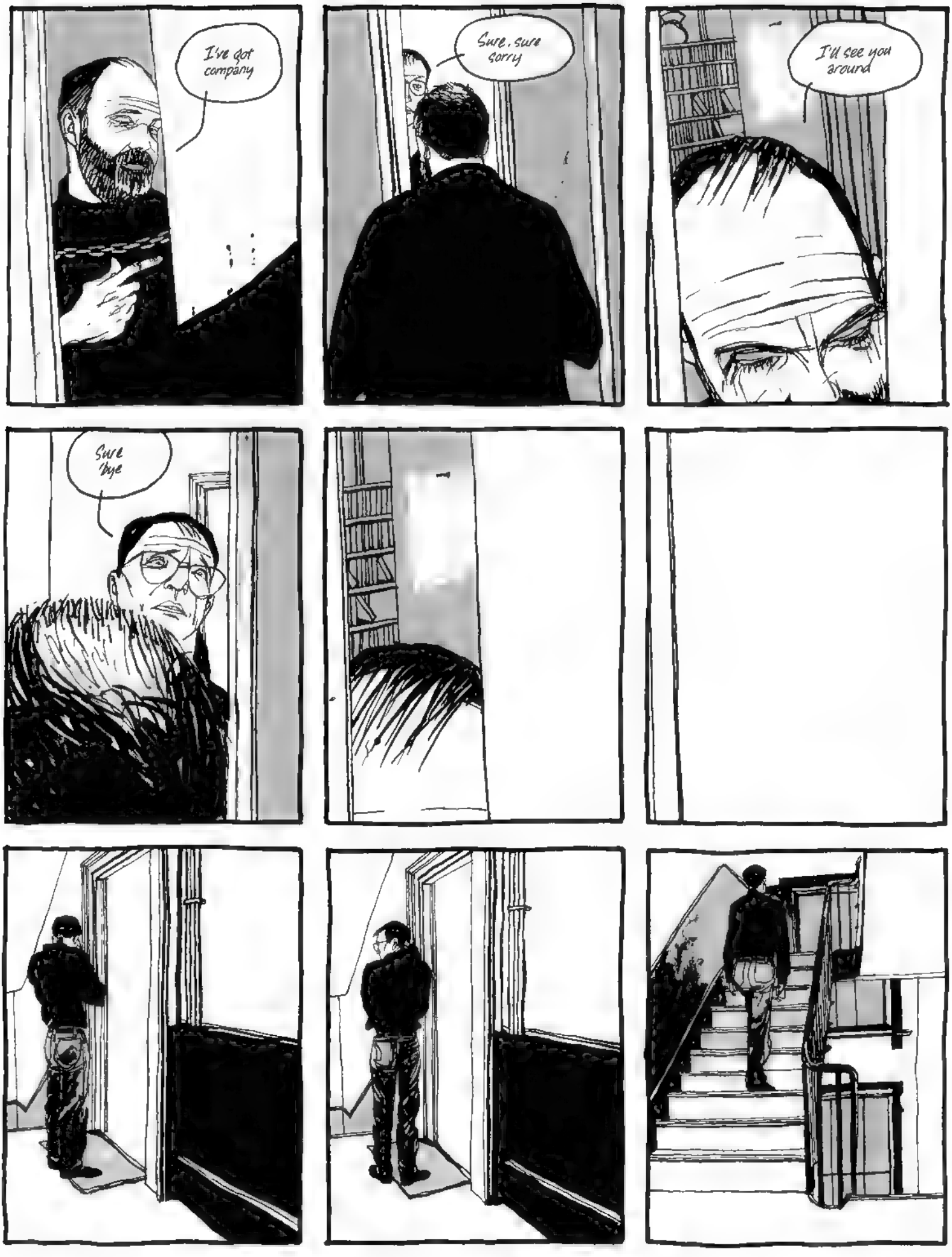

And the third stair up.


The one that I sit on.
And write on.
And lean on.


A friend. I call it "Third stair".

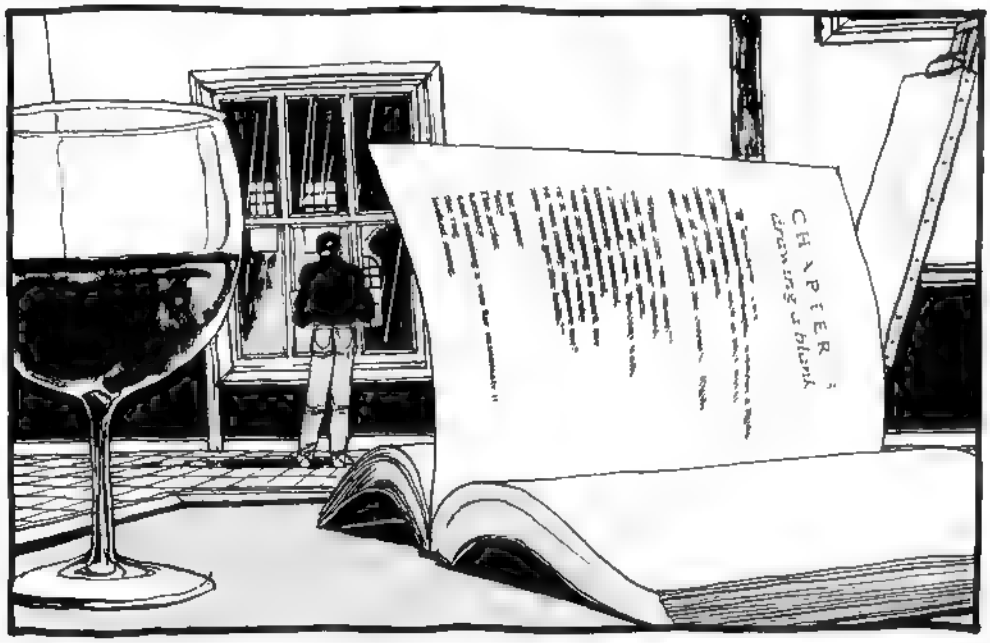
A bit uninspired, I agree. But... appropriate you see
And to the many other objects that surround me, anthropomorphic and otherwise, I dedicate this book
I talk to you in one way or another,
and simply by being there, you talk to me.
What ?

knock knock
Who is it?
It's Leo I'm sorry to bother you Do you know what this noise is?
Hello Leo
I'm sorry, can you hear this?
It's like a ahm it's like a low hum, like a bee, like a three-ton bee Jesus, it made the wall shake, it's like this warm low
Are they still working on the building or is someone around here stroking a tremendous bee
Leo
Yes?
Leo another time, okay?
Oh yes, sure


I've got company
Sure, sure sorry
I'll see you around
Sure bye

Best place for an earthquake, inside a door
Is that what it was?
What, pet?
That noise
What noise?
Didn't you hear it? About five minutes ago?
Hear what, pet?
Oh it doesn't matter
How's the painting going?
Ahm well, not very well, Im afraid

Dont worry, deer I 'ad an aunty who painted well, made wickery baskets but same sort o' thing, y know
She'd stare at them piles of straw, an' 'er little wickery basket book for days, and then suddenly, poof off she'd go, quick as a pigeon, struck by the muse
Oh yes? well, you never know
Yes, that's true You never know
Odd that, i'nt it?
Ahm yes 'Bye
'bye deer.
RHETORICAL
for INANIM
and IMPRO



CHAPTER 3
drawing a blank

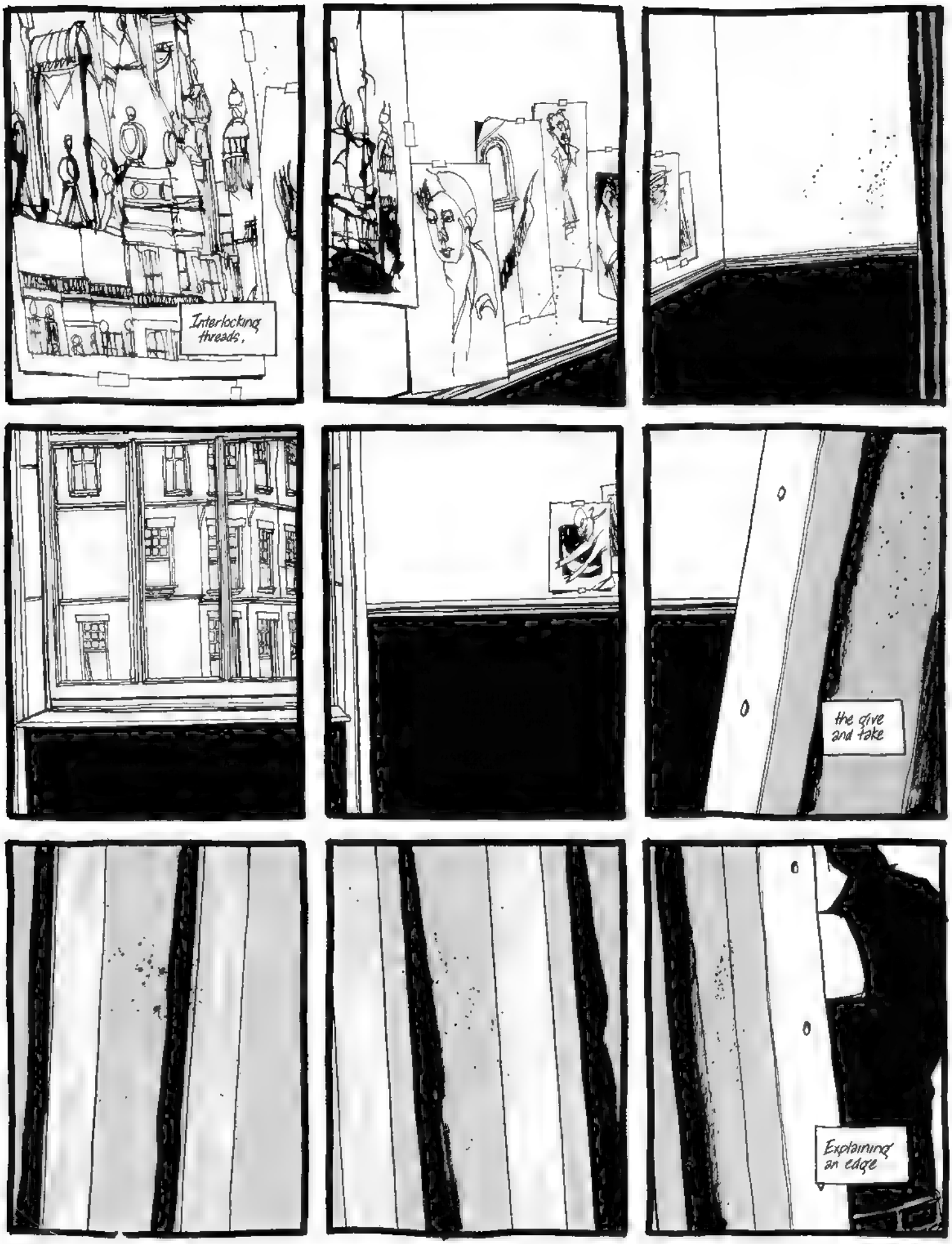
The Permanent White, without a fight,
let the brushes, such as they were,
rather dog eared,
a bit of a sight,
mix and match the colours, "Right",
said Michelangelo.
'What are you inside?"
And the paper replied,
"Sod off, you spick!
I'm white and perfect
I'm lightly textured,
I'm cumuli, ivory, Tuscany walls.
Intrinsically natural,
I'm equadrilateral,
If you're going to mark me
you'd better be worthy
can you really improve me?
Have you got the balls?"

The paper
Piety
The artist
Anxiety
And sensing a win for inanimate things,
the rug
looked smug

a blank

White, witho

the individual lines begin to describe something
Slowly
the individual lines
begin to describe something


Interlocking threads,
the give and take
Explaining an edge

Pieces of paint,
shapes between forms
Yes, a harder edge
A face
Christ
Erm well, I'll come back to it

Give up, Sabarsky

You know, you can always hide in de shadows, now "

like a lickle hanimal,
wid lickle beady eye
Dey a sad an lonely ting y know
But y'know if you goin to hilluminate de darkness dat surroun you,
dat wrap you in de sleep o de night.
you need de confidence

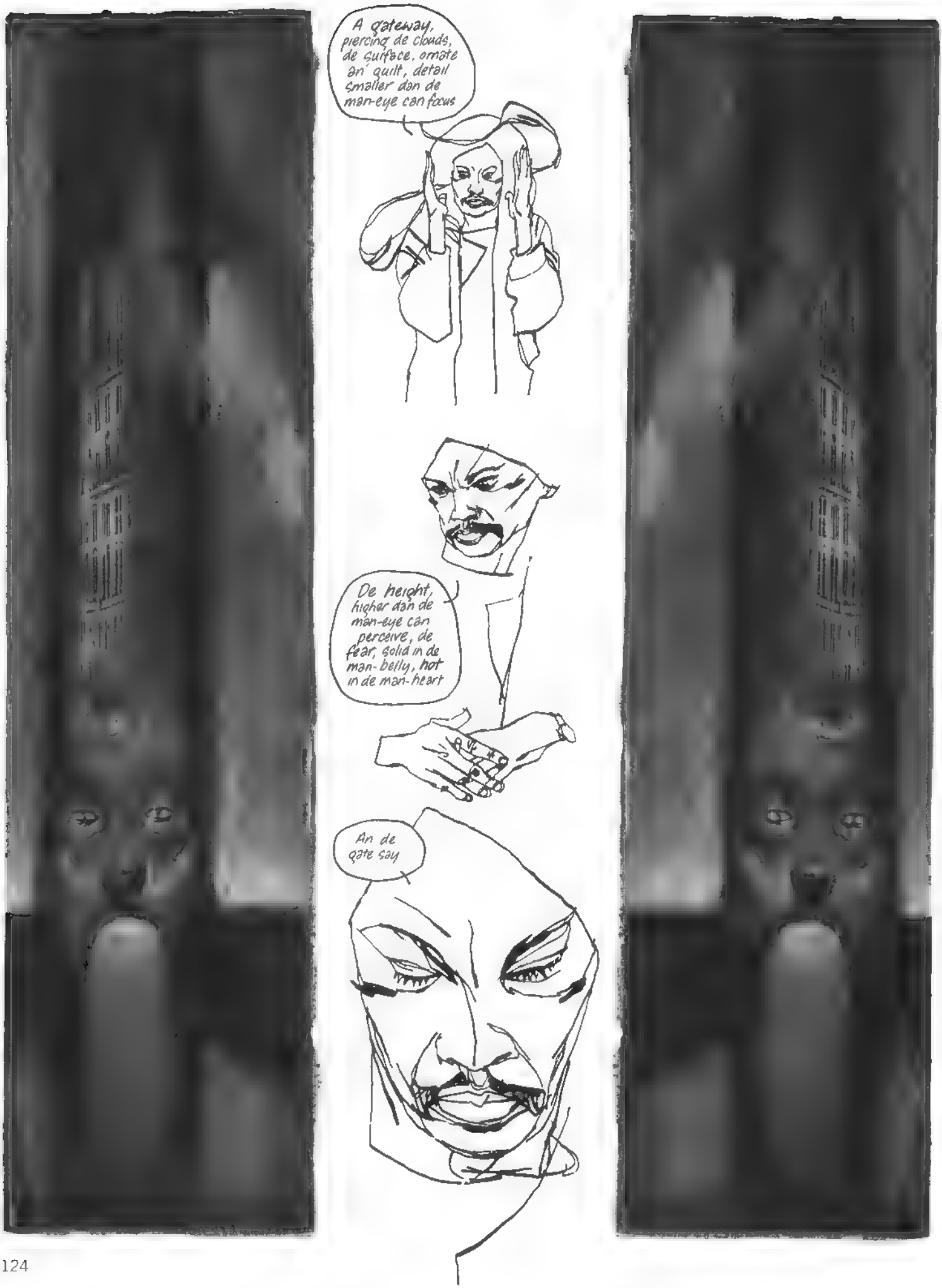
to strike de match.
An dats hexac'ly what God did
Befo' him, nothin' hexisted in manifestation
Time there was not for change had not yet re-begun

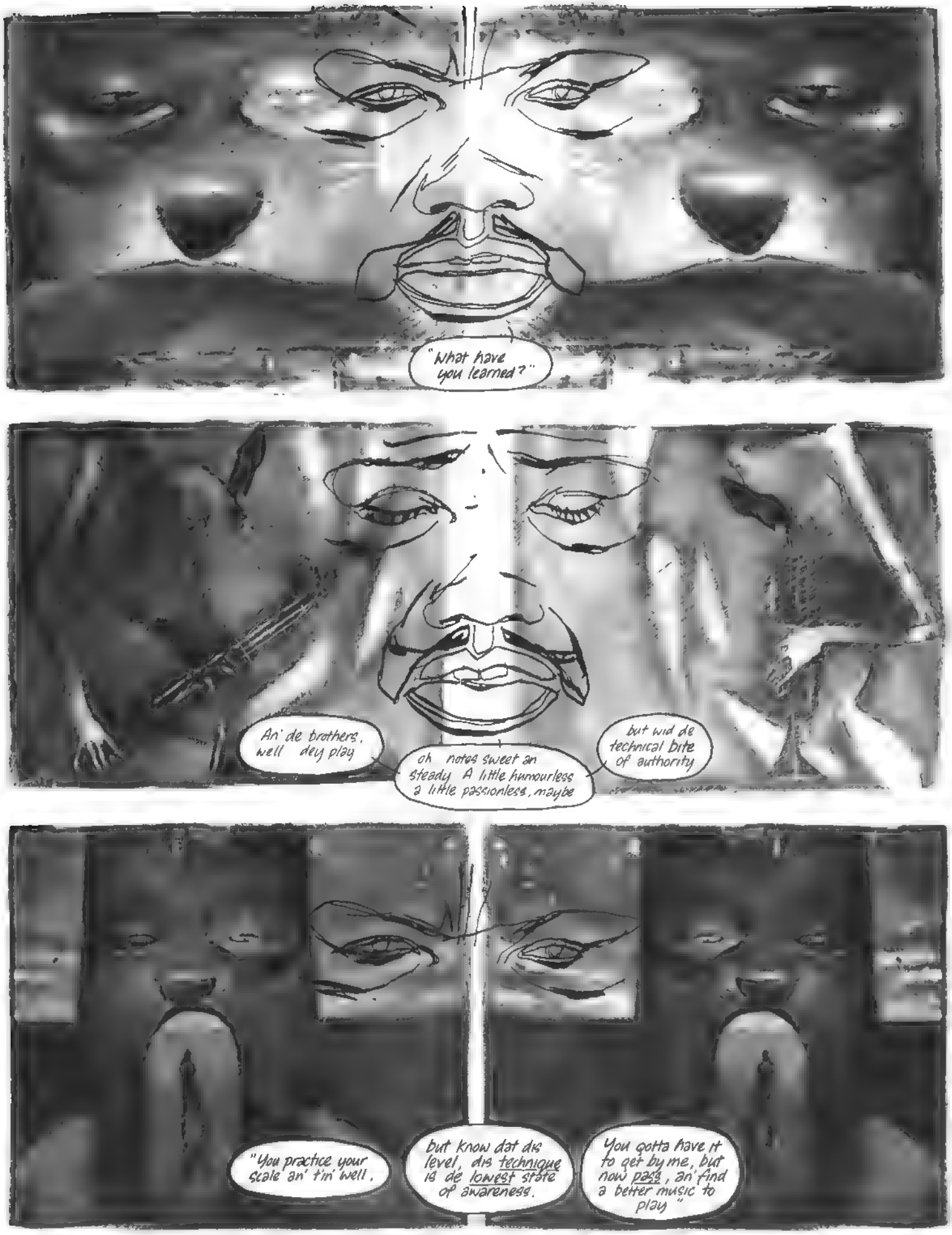
Things there were not, for form had not yet re-presented hitself
Action there was not, for there were no things to act
Light there was not for the flame of spirit had not been rekindled
But now de heat o'dat light warmed de world
And de music dat come bubblin' up like a fresh spring from de very soul o' de world, formed a bridge, its great architecture rising through de mists

What, you don believe I?
Oh well, I's sure dat on de first day, God probly didn't say, "Hokay, I fink I'll make a bridge..."
but dis is a halligory, so don' be so bloody literal
Anyway, de musical bridge existed, connecting de verse from de chorus, de strings from de belly, an' de audience from de artist
An' dis bridge give birt' to two sons
An' let me tell you, it were a messy business, y'know. You never see a bridge give birt', you know what I talkin' about
But de two sons were fine an' strong an' grew at a rate a' knots

But, as is often de way, de two boys want to establish they own identity
An' soon they is harguin' an' cussin' each other, an' den dey is denyin' dey own blood roots, an' maybe dis
.. dis is de first lie
So de brothers separated
Walkin' away from each other. A duel widout a count, hopposites repelling, across de causeway.
Dey walk a long time, now

An' while dey walk, dey practice dey music
If you wonderin' where de instruments come from, a good player, he born wid his axe
An' dey were good players alright
An dey keep walkin'
De end o' de bridge never seem to come into sight
Until one day in de distance way, way, far away, somet'in' loomed
Dark an' serious
Brink an' hominous


A gateway, piercing de clouds, de surface, ornate an' quilt, detail smaller dan de man-eye can focus
De height, higher dan de man-eye can perceive, de fear, solid in de man-belly, hot in de man-heart
An de gate say


"What have you learned?"
An' de brothers, well dey play
oh notes sweet an steady A little humourless a little passionless, maybe
but wid de technical bite of authority
"You practice your scale an' t'in well.
but know dat dis level, dis technique is de lowest state of awareness.
You gotta have it to get by me, but now pass, an' find a better music to play"

An' de two brothers passed
An' de bridge, it jus' seem to continue forever
Now it were at dis point dat de two brothers' lives truely separated One o' dem refined an purified away at his music, smoothin' to a polished an shiny fin'.
He was aware of what his music was, but he started to lose grip of what it meant. Where it had come from, its' origins
Meanwhile, de other find a way of hexpressin' dat music quick an easy but den he jus' got lazy
He too busy havin' a fine time to make use of de notes layin' dormant inside a him

An dey blow.
Long into de night, oh what a racket
Notes dat is lost, jostlin' for space,
formless ideas, cul-de-sac crescendos, stretchin' pt de'ckd, fiery litter
enough

ENOUGH!
E...
...nough
Dis is gettin' nowhere Maybe it because de mists have clouded over de past as well as hidin de future, but you cant be fallin into dis trap
Know dis den, de peril of over-refinin an under-refinin'
"If you overefine you get lost in de music. If you underefine you get lost in de experience Either one results in going away from who you really are

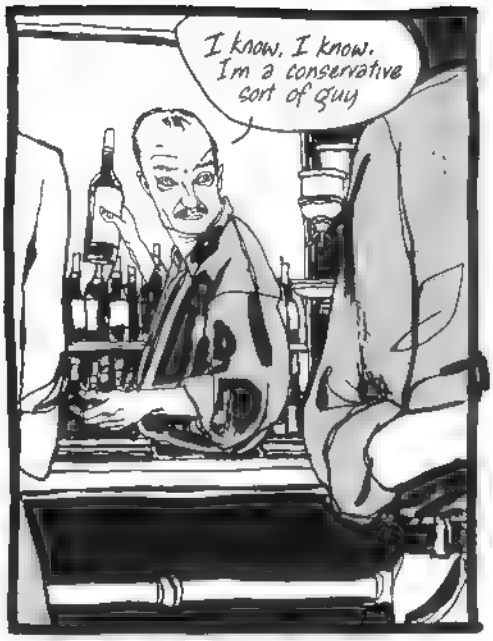
An' jus' as de mists seem to enquif de bridge completely and utterly,
both de brothers see a lickle man, way way off, a hazy lickle shadow, walkin' toward dem
An' slowly an' surely, an' closer dey come until de two brothers face each other
An one brother say
"Dis is bloody ridiculous. How can you have a bridge dat is all middle an' no ends? I don't get it at all"
"It must be one a' dem halliporical bridges"
de other brother reply
But de truth was simpler dan dat.
De first cycle of d'eir lives had passed

All dat remained was to make peace wid their past. An' de music dey create, de spirituality of it, de energizing sanctifying clarity of it..
was true
An' you may say, "Who is dis guy, talkin' about truth?"
Dont he realise dat dis is de time o profit an parsimony Of raffish flash an gaudy vulgarity Truth is drab amongst all dis bauble an' swish
But dis is too heasy
It a heasy ting to live for de lightnin crack hillumination of possession
It a heasy ting to hide in de dark o' faith
Pretendin' dat anyt'in' dat scitter an' scuttle in de night is jus' bad himagination
It a heasy tin' jus to stay where you at Grow roots vegitate
Be a potato

It all heasy, because all de greed an ignorance an' denial in de world is as old as de first lie
It a much more difficult t'ing, havin' heard de strike o' de match, havin' warmed ourself against de fiery glow, to move forward an' illuminate another part of de darkness which surroun' you
It a difficult t'ing because. you haff to 'except dat if you goin' to hol' de candle. den de wax is goin' to burn de hand
At de hend o' de day. de pain is part of de process of revelation
An' dats de truth
A.
...men

Can I get a ahm a white wine dry?
He seems like an interesting chap
Oh yeah The Angel? Oh yeah I mean he's just like this
musician you know?
Uh huh
You're right, you're right, I'm selling him short
He's a poet An immense creative force I mean, the man's a god, really

Mmm

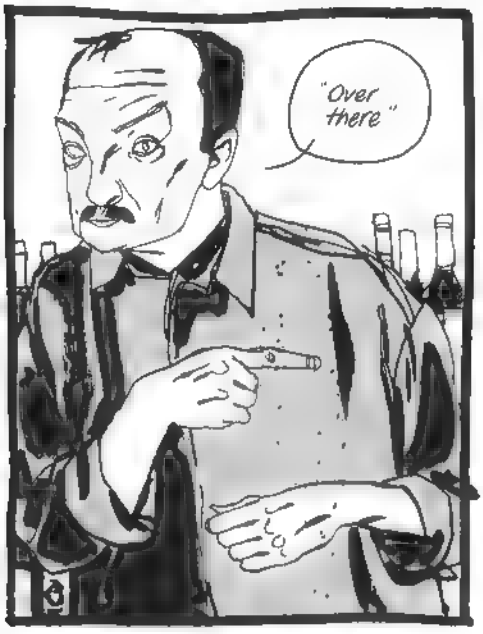

I know. I know. I'm a conservative sort of guy

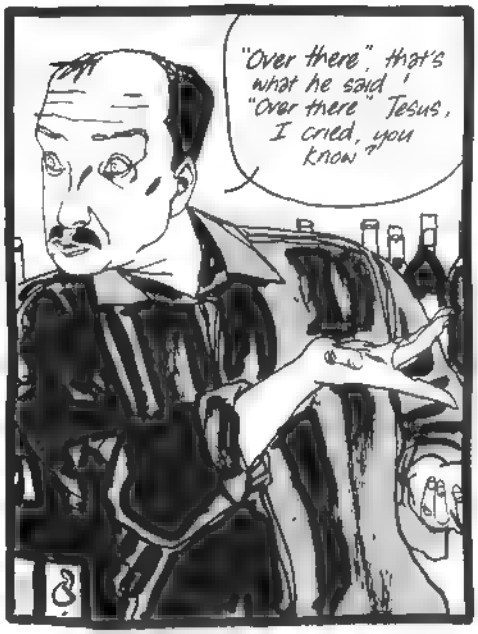
Okay, the man's a glowing, transcendant ball of light
A pure and all embracing power

An opalescant.
Yeah, I get the picture

You know, when I first came to work here, I asked him where the toilets were you know what he said?

Do you know what he said?
I can't imagine


"Over there."


"Over there", that's what he said "Over there" Jesus, I cried, you know?

Profound
"Over there", that's what he said

You know the word 'genius' was created for him
He seems quite shy
Oh yeah Shy? Oh yeah And moody.
Moody?
Oh yeah, terrible. Arrogant son-of-a-bitch really. We all hate his guts
Thanks
Sure
Hey, thanks for the tip! Now I can get that box of matches I wanted. Christ!
Yeah. Who's next?

Hey
Erm. Angel isn't it? I didn't know you lived in the building
So?
I'm sorry I, erm I was down at the club this evening. Great gig
Hmm
I've always wanted to play
You really seemed to keep everything together

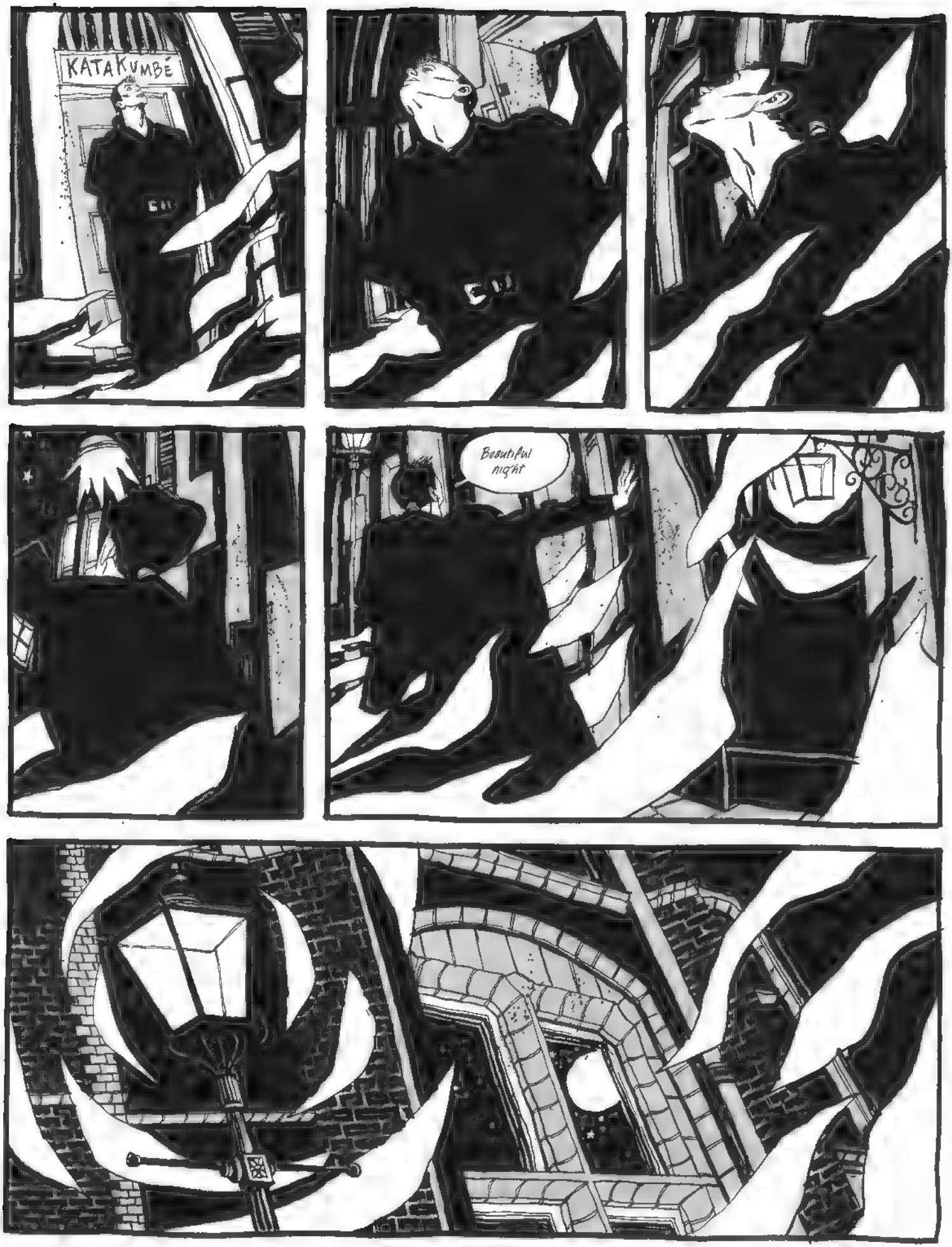
Not a 'appy band
No?
Uh, uh
Ahh I wanted to ask
I think you must be just above me, because well, I hear the sound sometimes A sort of resonant pipe or something Would that be you?
Not keepin' y up de night, I hope?
No, no I was a bit taken aback. the first time I heard it, but no
What is it, a pipe?
Stones

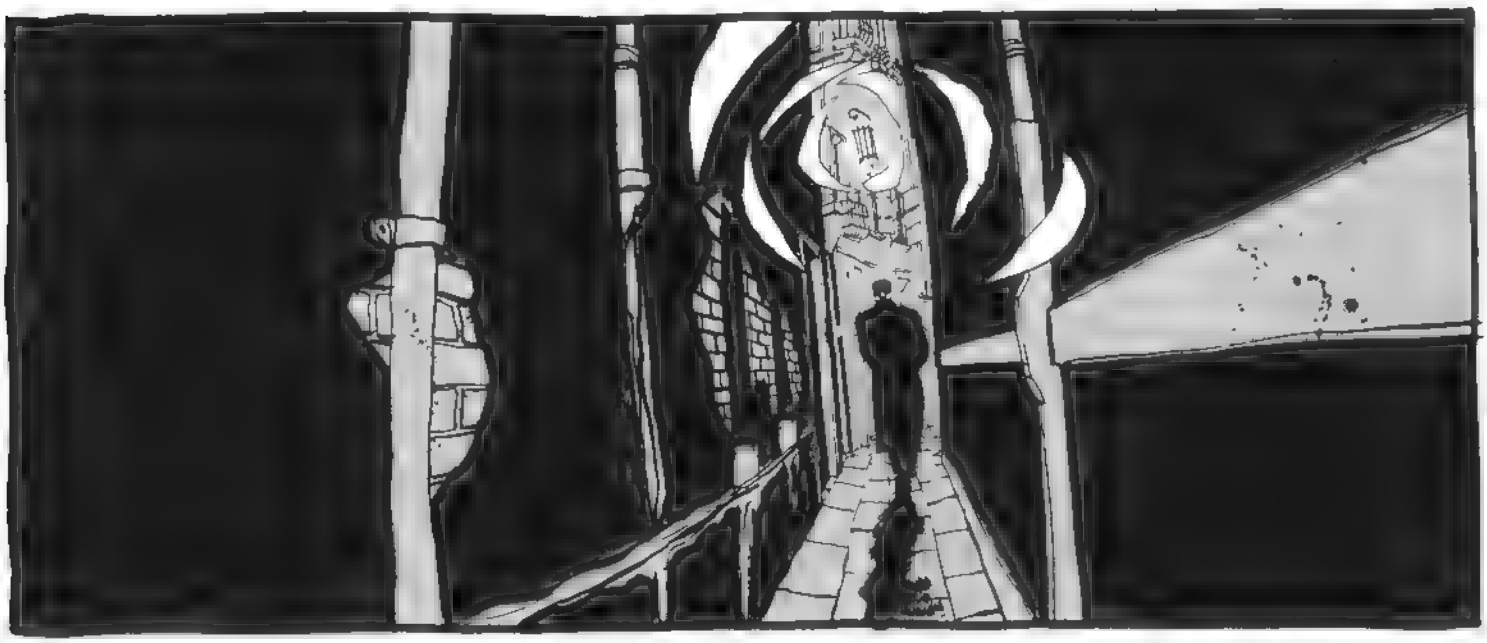
Pardon me?
Stones, man, resonatin' stones
Stones? Really?
Really
Look I find 'em aroun' de place, y'know Tune 'em up meself till dey hum wit life
Here.
Heh
I didn't know you could get sound out of a stone
Lotta strange t'ings in dis world, man. Oh, it easily explained alright, but it don't take away from de magic of it
How do you know what note it's going to make when you carve it?
Well I looks at de stone An' I strokes de stone An' I hacks it What it wants

And de stone tells me "I want to be a heff sharp."
So I chip away anythin' that doesn't look like a heff sharp An' I smoothes away anythin' that doesn't feel like a heff sharp.
Until, alls I got left is a heff sharp
How do you play it?
You just strokes it wid a slight pressure
Gentle, gentle, you treat your lady like dat? Gentle.
It doesn't seem to work
It will
Stone's not used to you, you not used to stone You both haff to learn about each other
Be seein' you
Yeah, thanks for the
erm yeah

You got some worried lookin' lines dere man
Mm?
Dese lines got a lot on dere minds.
wonderin' around, de page, lookin', all listless an' t'in', y'know
Heh the lines look how I feel Eager to please, but a bit the worse for wine
May I have a look, now?
Sure

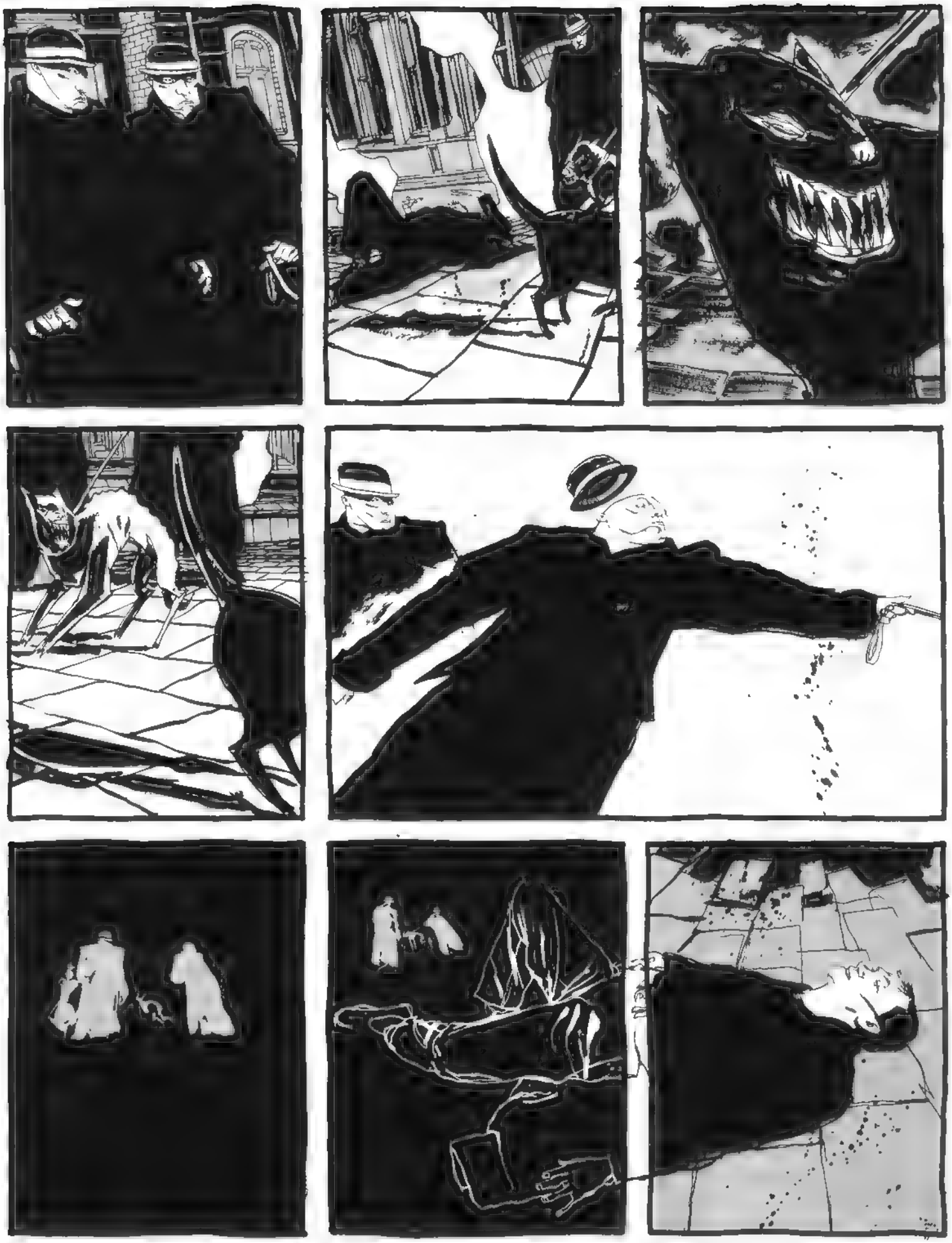
I'm really just ahm I don't know I keep hoping for a lead somewhere
Man only got so many lines to make in a lifetime, y'know Lotta lines here goin' nowhere
Can I borrow one o'dese?
Ahmm? Sure How come?
Dis one. I like dis one
I got a place for dis one to go.
Heh... that's one of the few that worked alright
Sure Take the book
I'll get it back to you soon
Don't worry about it


KATAKUMBÉ
Beautiful night

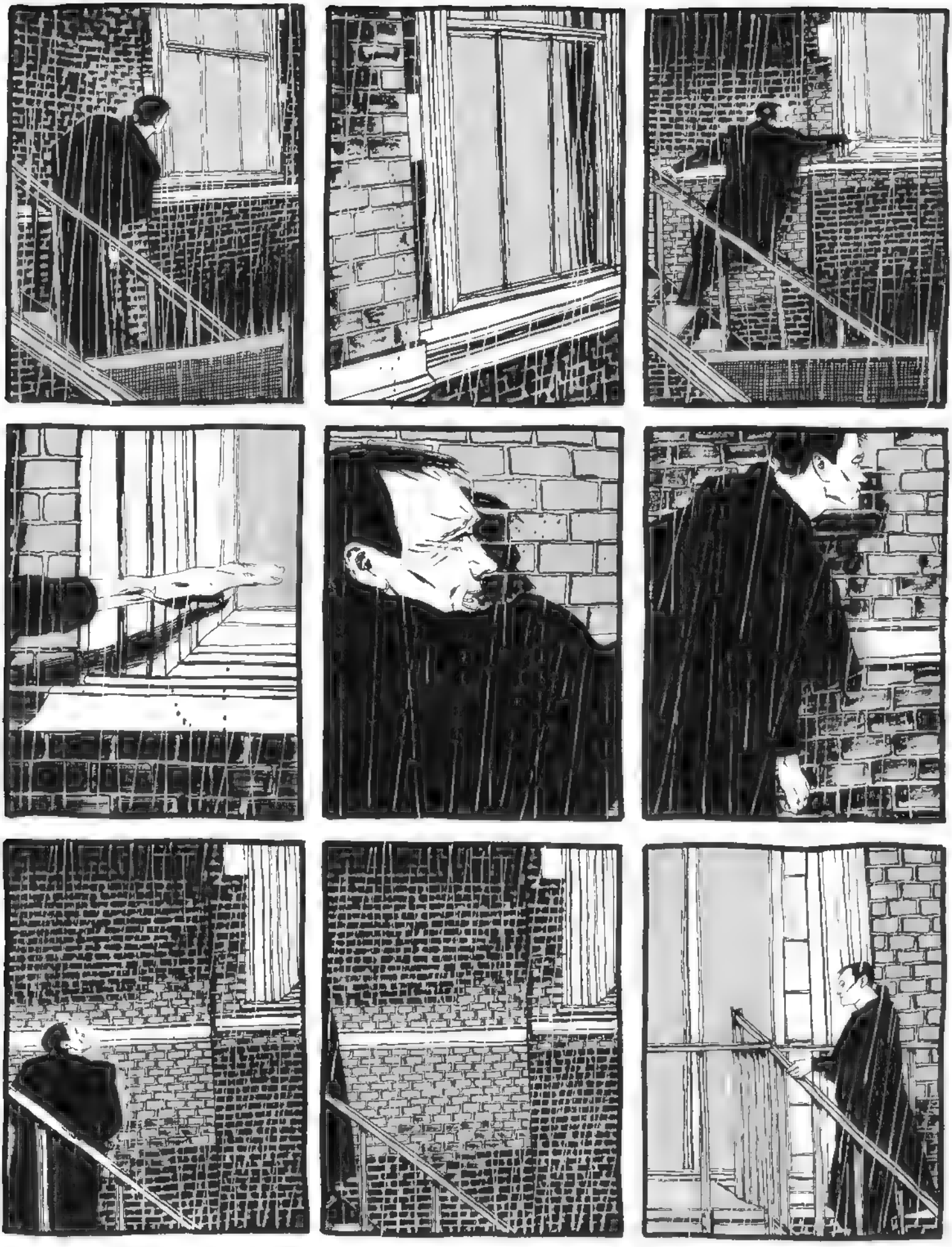


Hey!

Ahm



Shit!
What? What have I done?



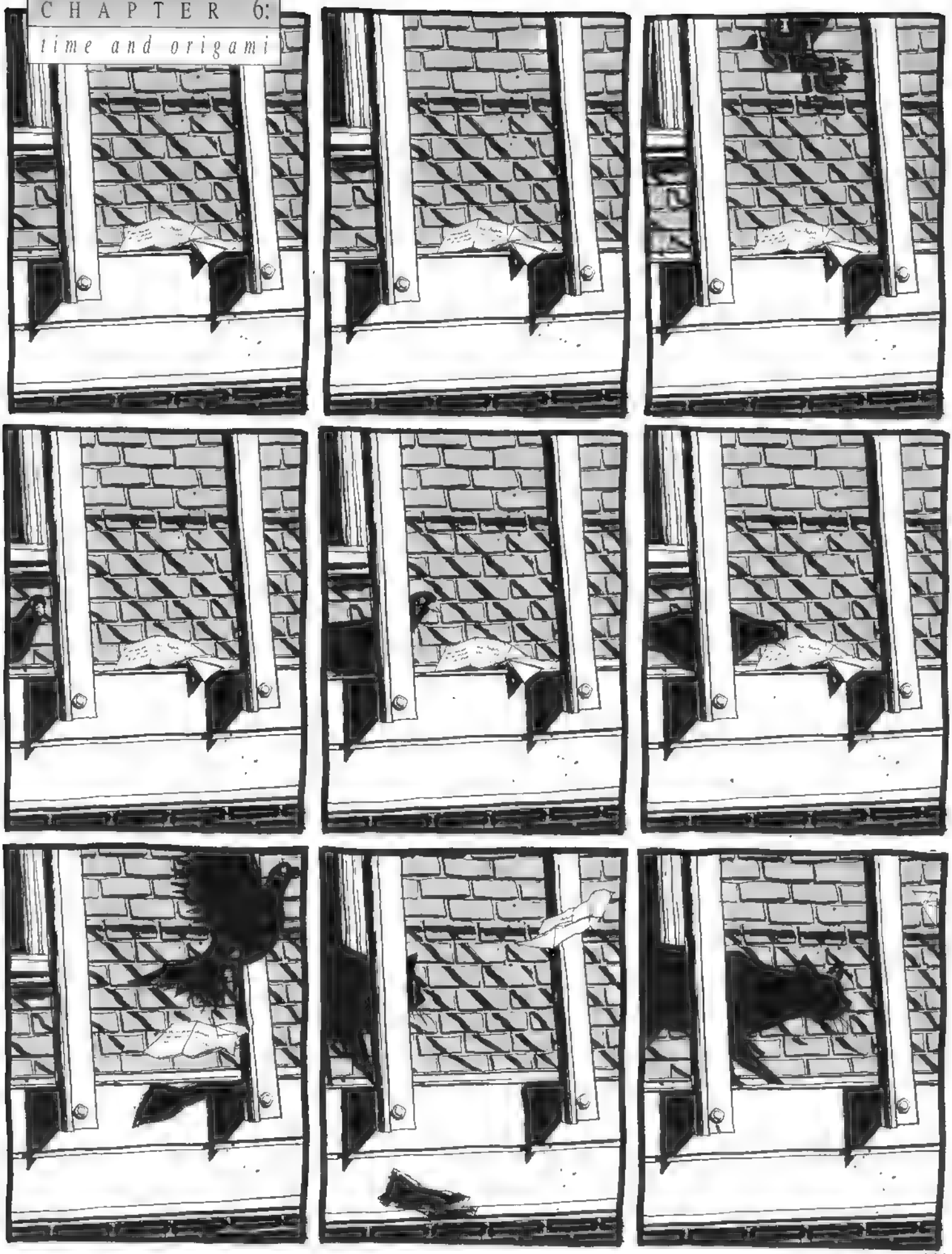
Shit! Somebody's ripped me off!
What?
Somebody's ripped me off!
This is my apartment isn't it?

I don't get this
Do you get this?

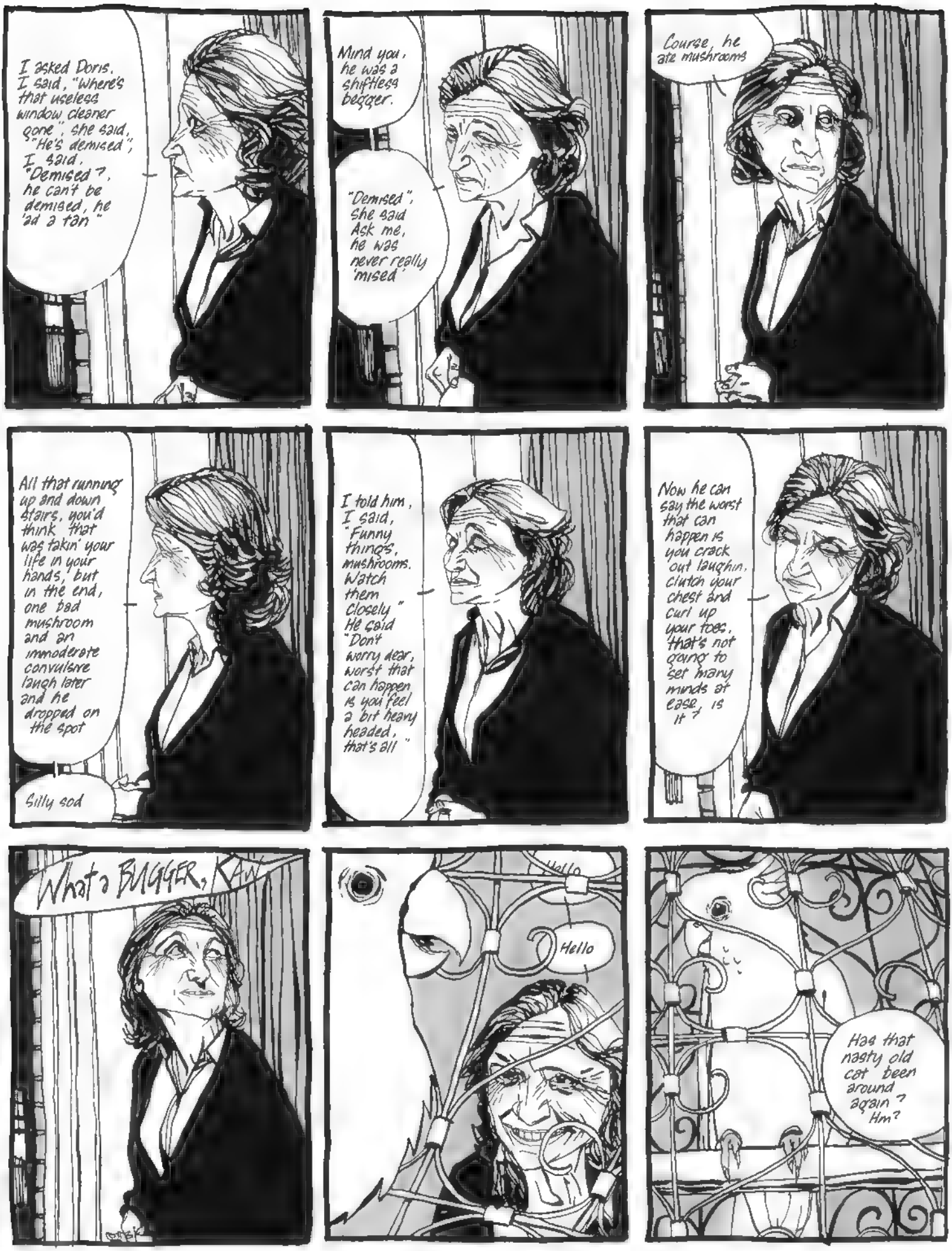
Hey, there are people down there!
This window's all misted up I can't see who it is
He looks angry
I wonder who they are ?
Look, she keeps moving forward to talk to him, but he's just being a bastard
and why they seem to be in my apartment ? you know this has been a bloody odd day

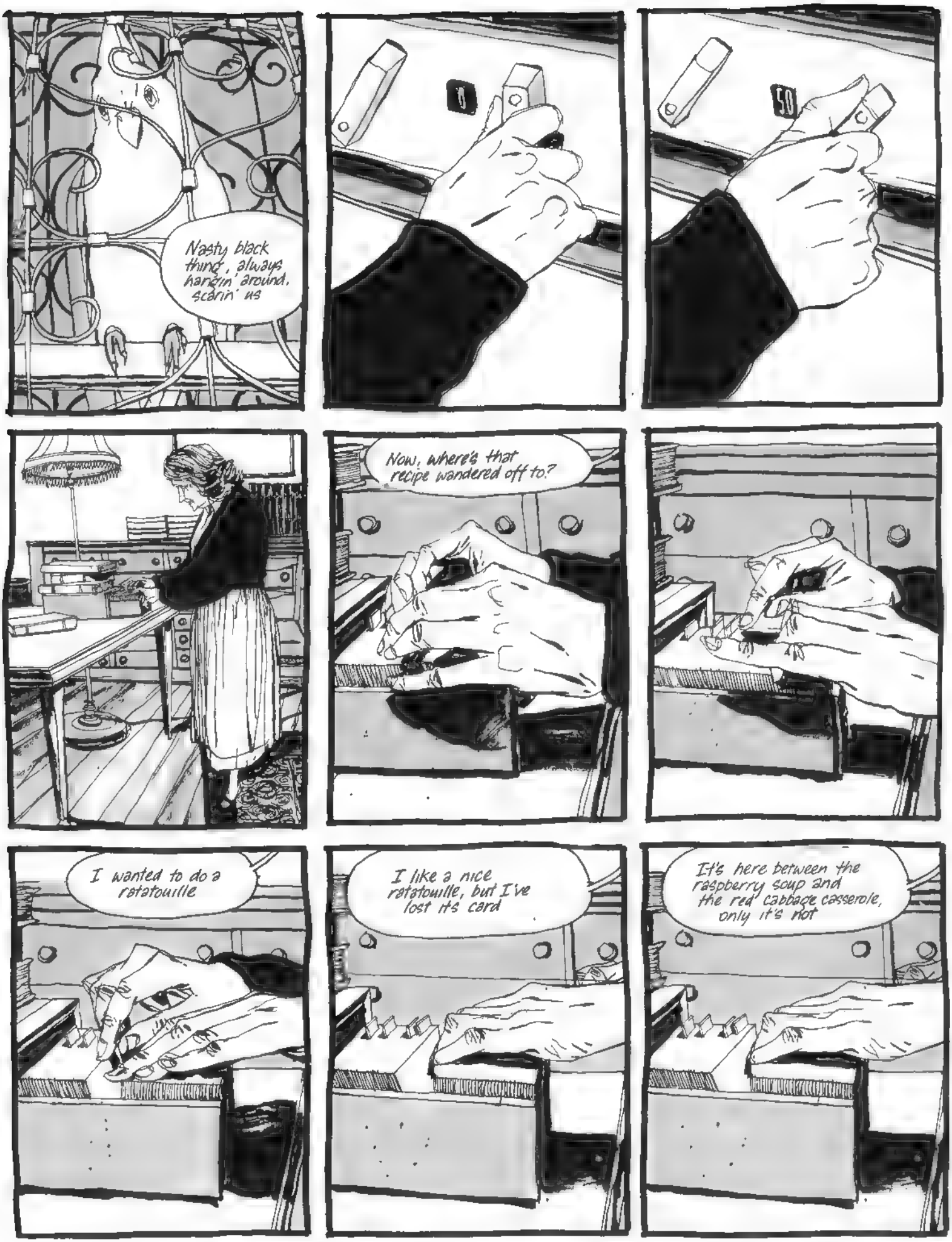
There's just a really odd, feeling in the air.
Thanks for saving my life, by the way
Nothing's really added up
I mean, it's not even been a two-and-two-make five sort of a day, it's more like a two-and-two-make fish or something
You know? Not even close to making sense
A man gave me a stone which hums it's been that sort of a day
So
How've you been? Not a great night for hunting, is it?
Not fit for man nor beast
That's an expression, you know? A saying
A people saying
I suppose cats have sayings like

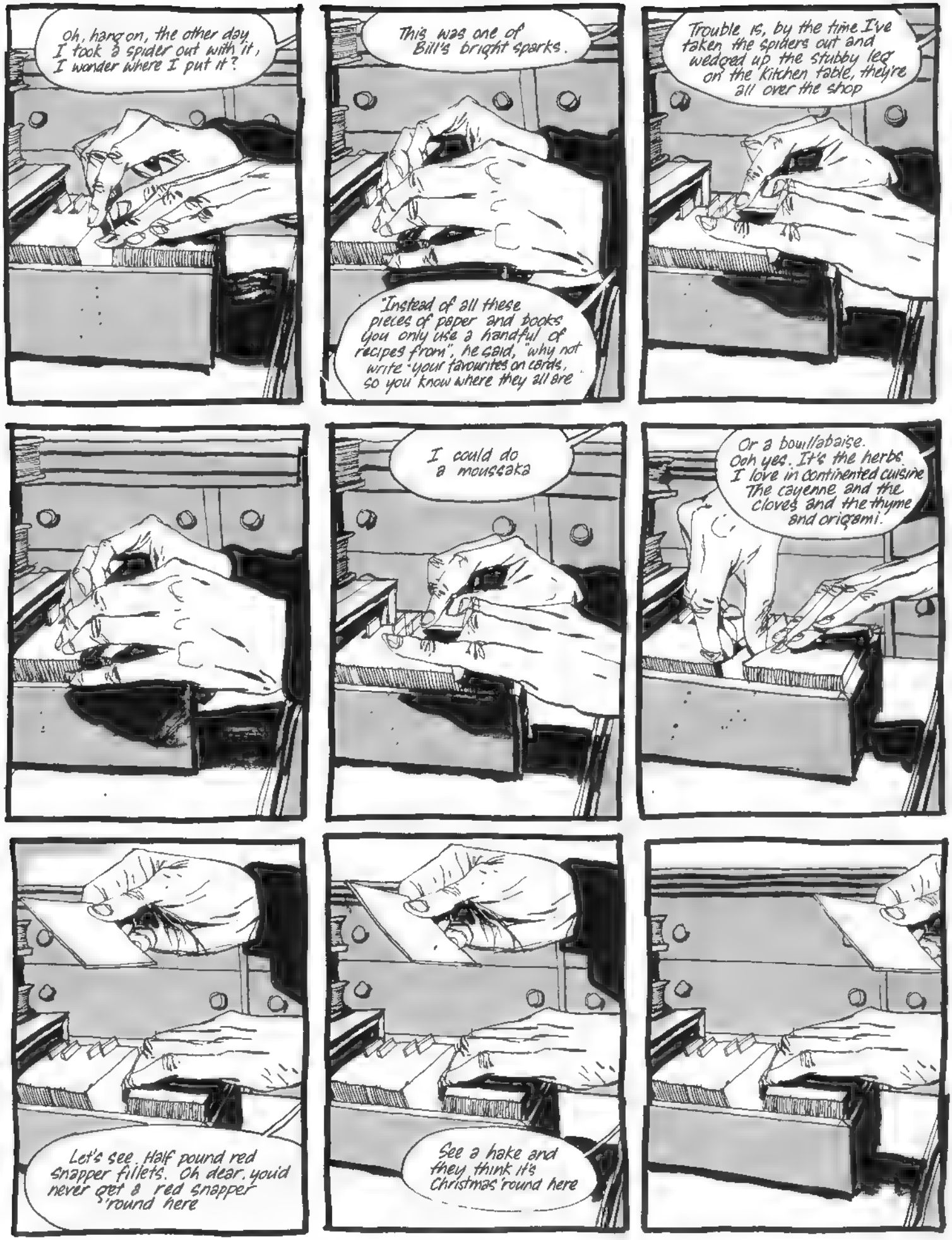
'A dead mouse has no entertainment value
How's that? Doesn't exactly trip off the tongue does it?
Okay, how about "Red sky at night, time for a nap"
red sky in the morning time for a nap"
It rhymes, it rhymes! What do you want from me?
God, everyone's a critic
Okay, I'm going to knock up Mrs What
I really feel like being lashed with a few choice pigeon similes
'bye cat

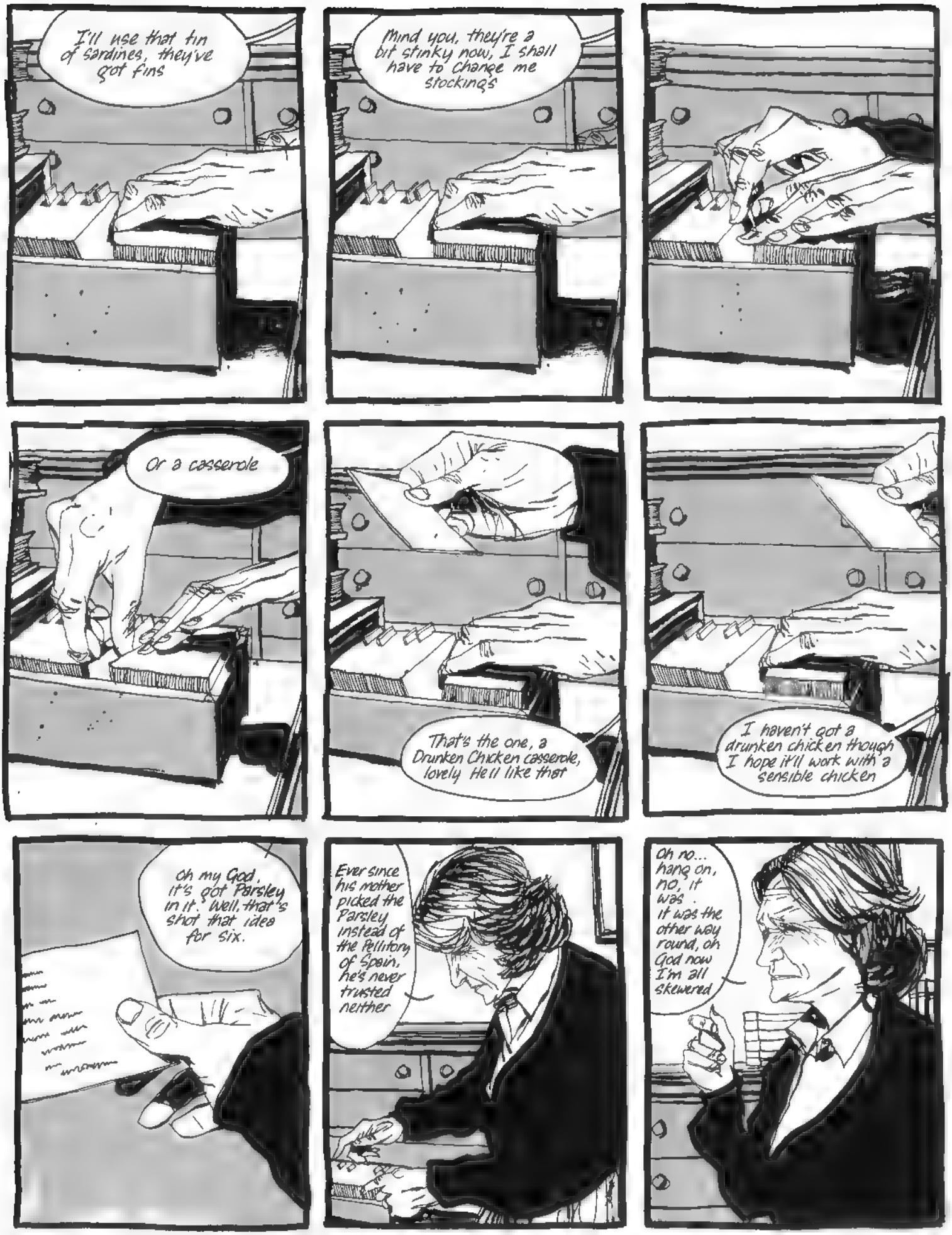


Bill's not home yet.
'E'll miss 'is tea
Tt
KAW! don't ask
Tt
God, look at these windows
I could do with windows, if they weren't so mucky
We used to have a window cleaner come round, but then he vanished


I asked Doris. I said, "where's that useless window cleaner gone", she said, "He's demised", I said, "Demised?, he can't be demised, he 'ad a fan"
Mind you, he was a shiftless beggar.
"Demised", she said Ask me, he was never really 'mised
Course, he ate mushrooms
All that running up and down stairs, you'd think that was takin' your life in your hands, but in the end, one bad mushroom and an immoderate convulsive laugh later and he dropped on the spot
Silly sod
I told him, I said, "Funny things, mushrooms. Watch them closely" He said "Don't worry dear, worst that can happen is you feel a bit heavy headed, that's all"
Now he can say the worst that can happen is you crack out laughin, clutch your chest and curl up your toes, that's not going to set many minds at ease, is it?
What a BUGGER, Kev
Hello
Has that nasty old cat been around again? Hm?


Nasty black thing, always hangin' around, scarin' us
Now, where's that recipe wandered off to?
I wanted to do a ratatouille
I like a nice ratatouille, but I've lost its card
It's here between the raspberry soup and the red cabbage casserole, only it's not


Oh, hang on, the other day I took a spider out with it, I wonder where I put it?
This was one of Bill's bright sparks.
"Instead of all these pieces of paper and books you only use a handful of recipes from", he said, "why not write your favourites on cards, so you know where they all are
Trouble is, by the time I've taken the spiders out and wedged up the stubby leg on the kitchen table, they're all over the shop
I could do a mousseaka
Or a bouillabaise. Ooh yes. It's the herbs I love in continented cuisine The cayenne and the cloves and the thyme and origami.
Let's see. Half pound red snapper fillets. Oh dear, you'd never get a red snapper 'round here
See a hake and they think it's Christmas 'round here


I'll use that tin of sardines, they've got fins
Mind you, they're a bit stinky now, I shall have to change me stockings
Or a casserole
That's the one, a Drunken Chicken casserole, lovely He'll like that
I haven't got a drunken chicken though I hope it'll work with a sensible chicken
Oh my God. It's got Parsley in it. Well, that's shot that idea for six.
Ever since his mother picked the Parsley instead of the Pellitory of Spain, he's never trusted neither
Oh no... hang on, no, it was. It was the other way round, oh God now I'm all skewered

Well I told her, I told her, I said, "You don't grow your herbs in alphabetical beds." I said
For one thing you get your Parsley's, I mean Parsley's Mars, and Pellitory of Spain's Mercury.
And then of course she had the Orpine next to the Parsley and that's owned by the moon The moon!
The moon next to Mercury, no wonder she had troubles
So anyway, she's putting Pellitory of Spain in the casserole, and we all sit down to eat
Now Parsley's what she meant and Parsley's easy going, moves all the, you know, the obstructions of the viscera and in women it, you know, it brings on the, you know, the women's thing.
.. which was none of his worry, anyway
So . BUT those hot Pellitory roots, well they're supposed to promote a flow of viscid humours from the head and, you know, the adjacent parts
AND it purges the brain!
It's no fun having your brain purged when you're eating a casserole on a Sunday lunchtime and that's no lie

If he'd 'ad the black and blue spots or the sciatica or something he'd be well away. but he was fine then
Anyway, I told her, I said, "I don't know much about much, but I know herbs Always try and keep abreast of herbs You don't plant them in alphabetical beds you have 'em in like, beds of the same dominium
All the moons together, all the Venuses together, all the Marses together, you get the idea
I was always good at natural science and that at school
I was s'posed to do housewifery but that was a joke Mrs Munn lived near the school and we used to go and clean her house That was housewifery.
But I liked gardening
RDEN
KERY
Mind you, all that's long gone
I do try and keep abreast of herbs though That an geometry

I liked my geometry teacher when I left he said, "Edie he said 'If you get through life like you got through geometry, you'll be alright'
I think he knew it was sheer luck I got it right
So
No casserole Not after is mum
Mind you, he's never trusted er carrots, neither
Oh my God
Oh my God, look at this
Oh my God Me face looks like a blind-man's doodle.

I don't think that saffron does any good. None of the solar herbs seem to do much. Doesn't matter whether you have half a scruple or a scruple an'a half, it's a waste of good honey, if you ask me
Me dad was the worst though
Wasn't he?
Course you weren't around then
Oh my GOD
No, clever clogs, you weren't around
Probably a good thing too. You'd have learned some words off him, my God
He was a cantankerous old goat. Probably because he was, you know, in pain all his life, what with his gravel and his moisture
Nobody used to really know what was wrong with him
But he never wanted to be fifty. Just had a thing about fifty
He could turn it on though. He'd be grey, ooh, he'd look like a Belsen object

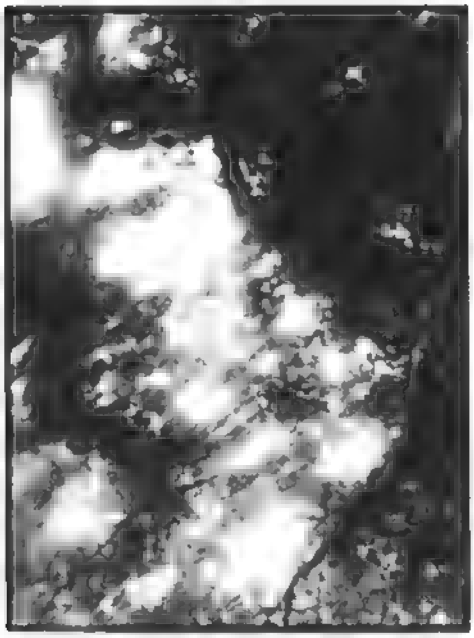
But when someone came over, he wouldn't fuss, he'd smile and quip ooh he was a great quipper
And then, when they left, he'd say, "Oh God, I feel rough." He could just turn it off and on
He didn't want people to see you see.
Amazing
But none of the doctors knew what was the matter.
Course, that's what he had engraved on his tombstone
"You see? I told you I was ill"
Knock Knock
Supper's up Mrs Featherskill

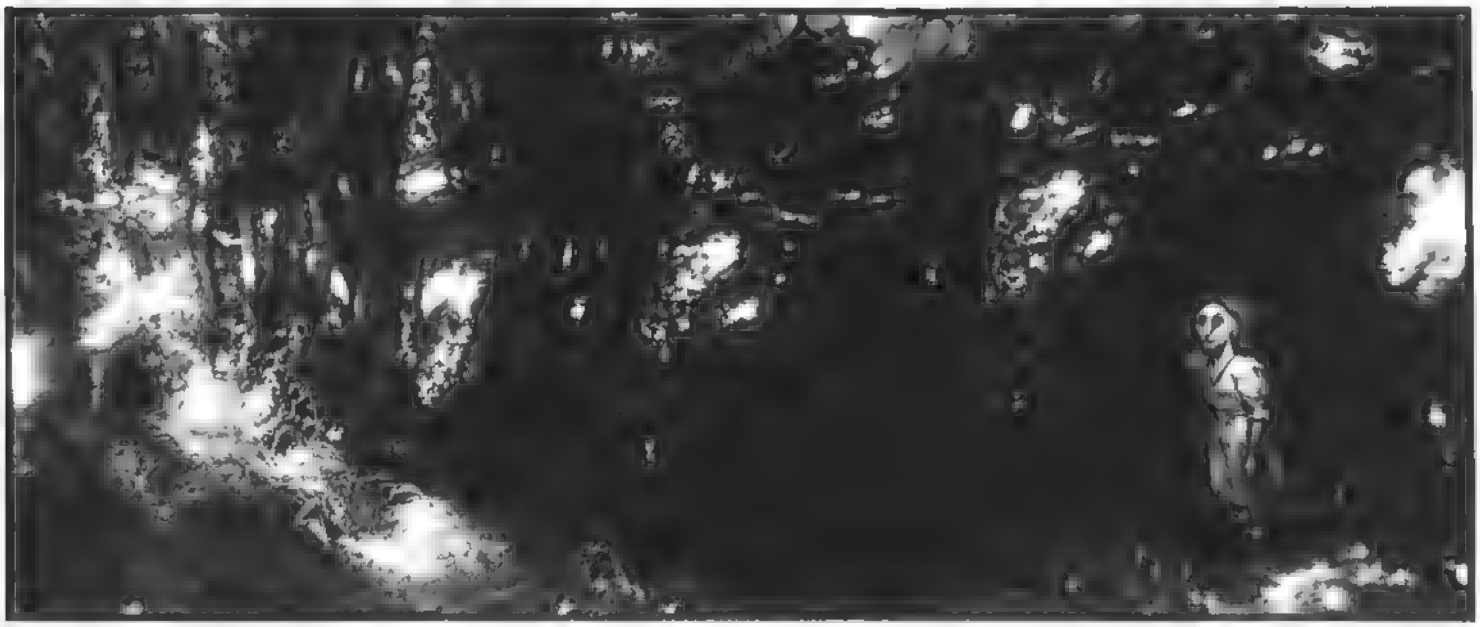
He must be a new one
God, I've lost track with who lives here, now
I don't like going out without Bill
Course, by the time we moved here, he was poorly too
But we talked to that architectural man and his missis at number five I thought he was a bit funny at first, with his knees and his eyebrows
Funny thin eyebrows Not 'funny ha-ha', 'funny peculiar'.
And they always smelt of thinners, but other than that they were quite normal
"How's that bombshell of a husband of yours?" he'd say
"Oh, he's alright, I'd say

He said once "How do you cope with him?" I said, "I'm used to him."
"I'll tell you this", he said, "It'll not be his heart that gets him, it'll be his temperament."
Quite perspective, he was, quite perspective
Oh my GOD!
OW!

Oh, STUFF!
STUFFIN' 'ECK!
God. Edie you are daft
Ooh it's all numb.
I forgot it was Doris's turn to do dinner I didn't even need to cook

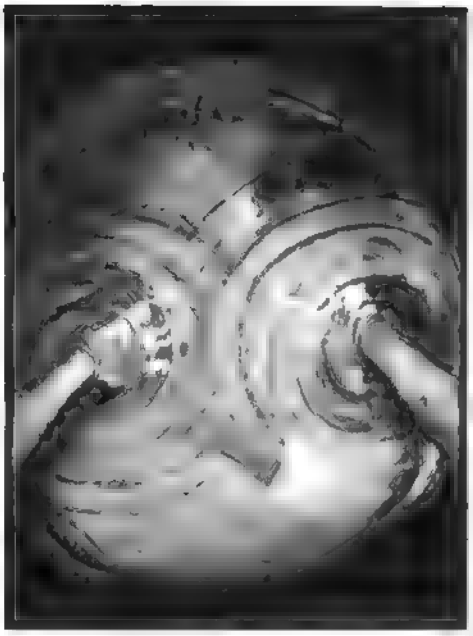
I wish Bill'd hurry up, it's well dark
Tt
Them's goin to blister up
I don't know what's good for blisters Pustules, collic, no bother but blisters..
"Be careful," Bill'd say all the time
"Be careful, Edie for God's sake" He was such a deep thinker
"Be careful, life's a tightrope walk he'd say "You have to concentrate, all the time or you'll fall off Dozens of times each day, were that close to death
RAW! Bill's not home yet.

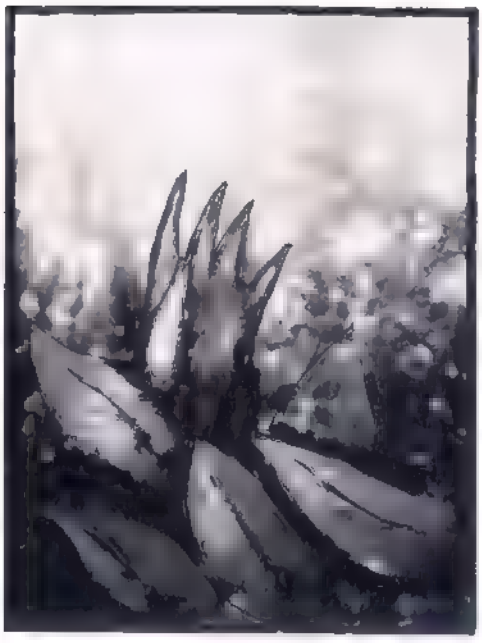


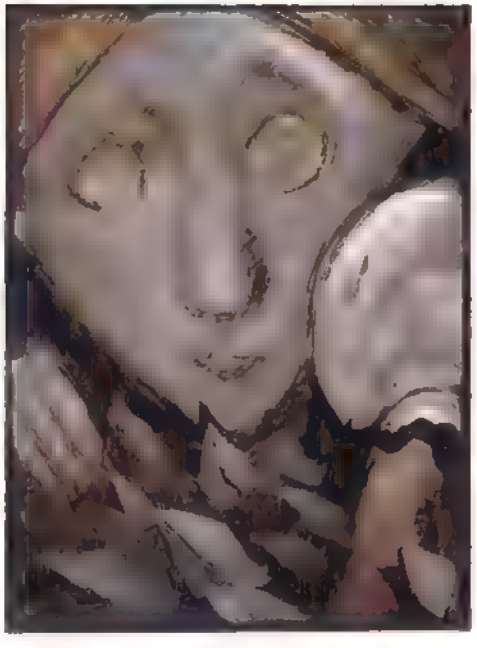
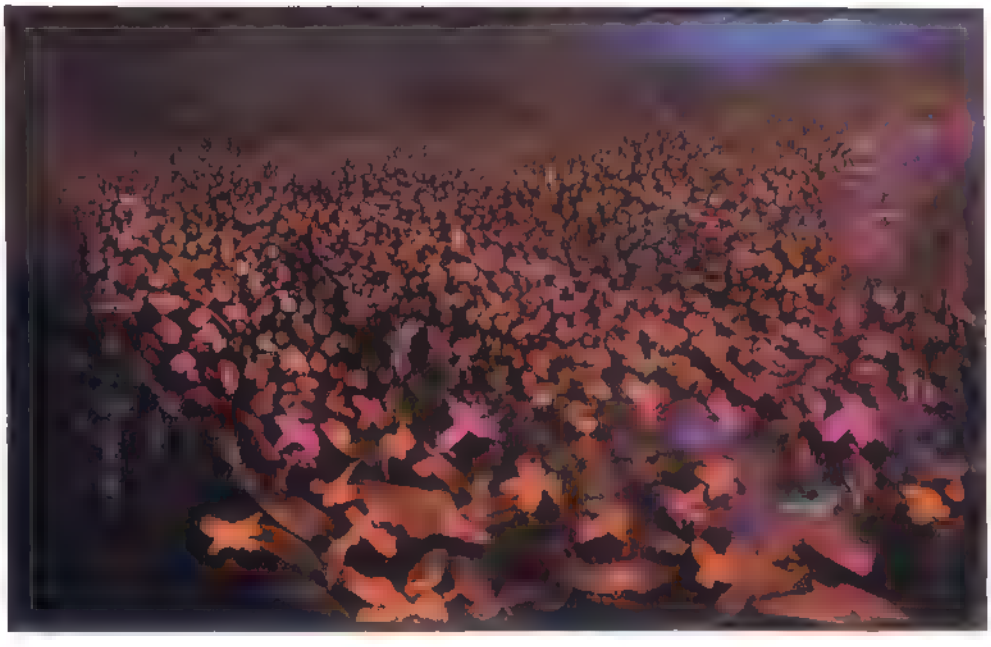


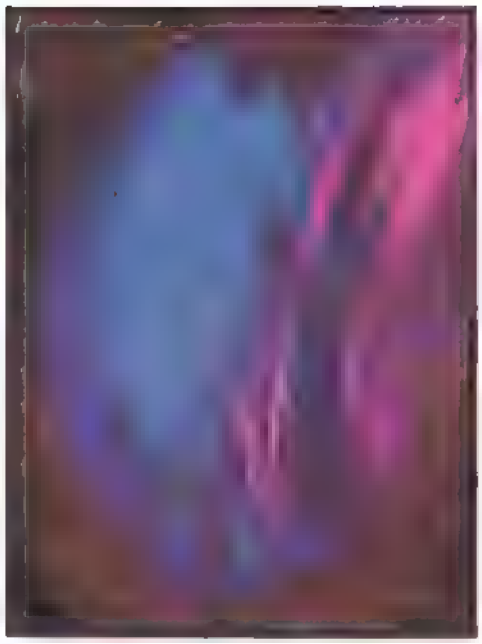
TRUE
FALSE.

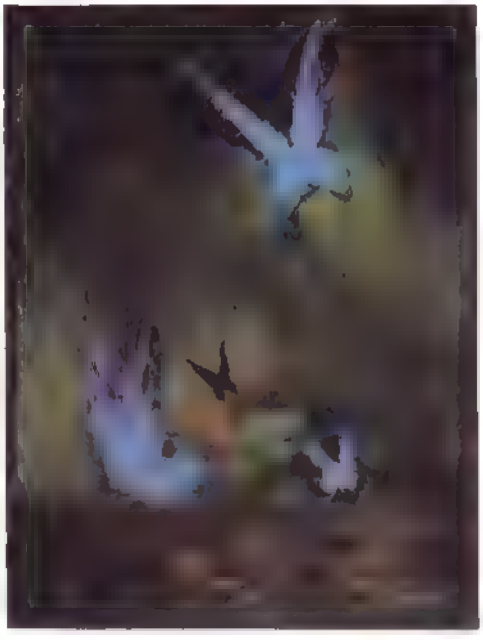
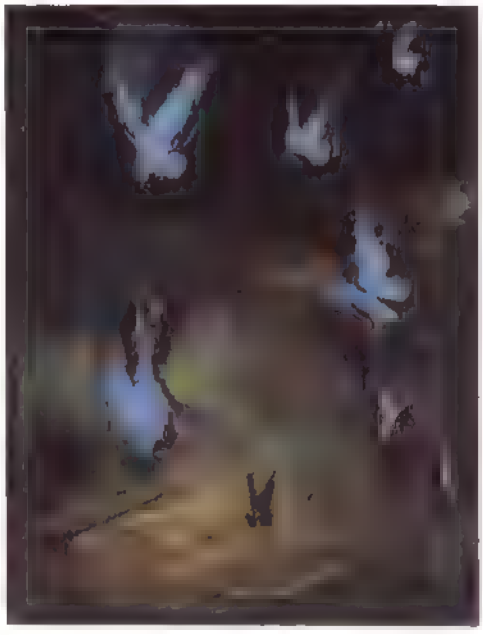
STUPID
BITCH

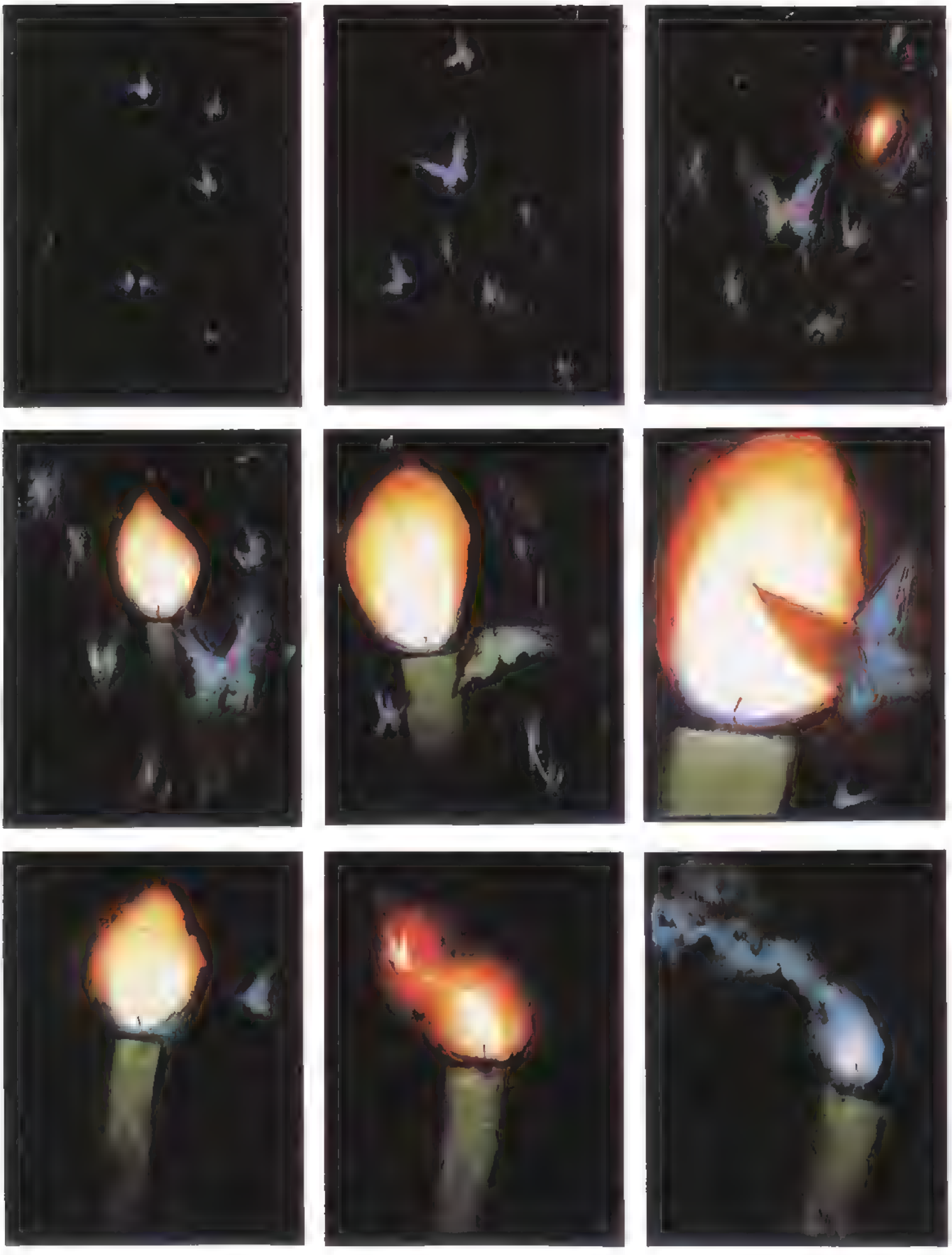






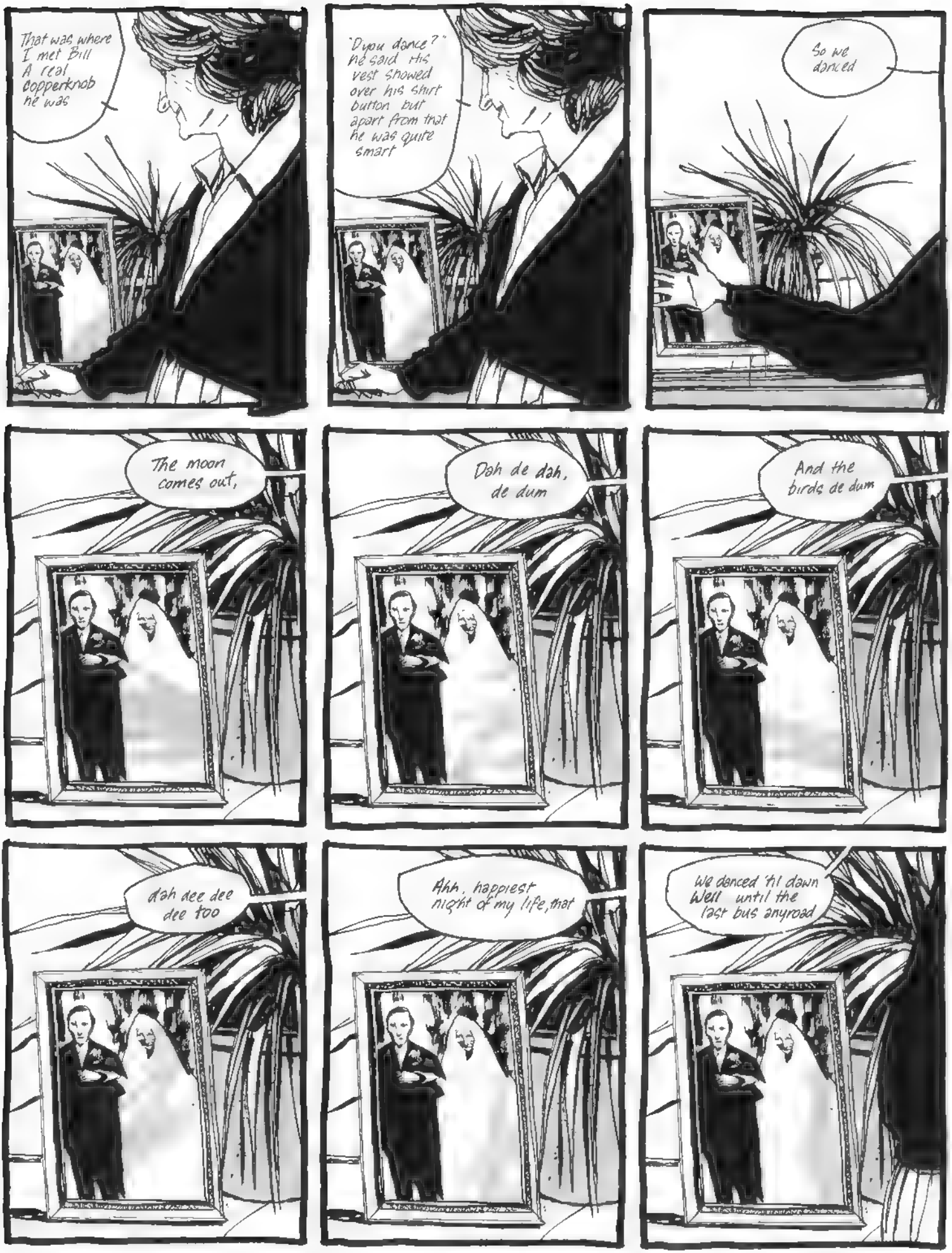





Well, that's that.
'E's missed is dinner now
Oh dear
Another late night, workin' all the hours God sends
Th
Pretty dress
Bill's not home yet!
Oh shush!
KAW!

I used to love workin at Markhams
I used to make some good sales
Good sales I did
First there was Mr uh God what was his name Bahm or Burm Burm
Burn No, not Burn .. with the wife who was always pregnant
AND she had toxemia, with big fat legs and water everywhere, ooh, she put us off our butties, she did
He was a cantankerous old bugger anyway, so I was glad he left
And then Mr Eccles He was a good sort Quiet man Quiet and unassuming Mr Eccles was
But I used to sell some stuff
Oh God, the coats. 20 40 60, a fortune they were An absolute Solomon's mine.
But I sold them
Mind you the first one, I shook
Well, I was only young and this woman bought a coat that cost more money than I thought there was anywhere

And I shook, like that as I took the money
And Mr Eccles took me to one side and said. "Now Edie, he said "Edie, you mustn't shake when you sell a coat To them it's nothing
If you have to shake, then do it when one of these girls comes in and buys a coat for a fiver because chances are that's all she has
To her it's everything"
I'll never forget that
He was a wise old bird
But then, you know, everything changed Nobody cared much about, you know, pride an that
They ad some rubbish in
But before then, I was proud of the way my customers looked when they tried something on
Now tell me they used to say, "tell me honestly", an I used to say "Well mrs So-an so, I don't think it quite hangs, but maybe this one" and shed say "I think you're right, Edie".
Then I'd save up me wages and go dancin on the Saturday and riding me bike on the Sunday and that was my life really


That was where I met Bill A real copperknob he was
"Dyou dance?" he said His vest showed over his shirt button but apart from that he was quite smart
So we danced
The moon comes out,
Doh de dah, de dum
And the birds de dum
dah dee dee dee too
Ahh, happiest night of my life, that
We danced 'til dawn Well until the last bus anyroad

When I got back I was late. Me dad shouted at us
I said, "I forgot me coat, I had to go back for me coat." He said, "Coat? COAT? I'll give you COAT!" I said, "I've already got one"
"Don't you get lippy," he said, and he sent me to bed
I didn't care. I was in love
I thought, somebody up there's looking after you, Edie
I've always thought that
Here I am, I'm happy I'm short of nothing I've got God provides
Bill said, "If God provides, how come it's me that's got to pay the 'lec'ty bill before they cut us off."
Heh

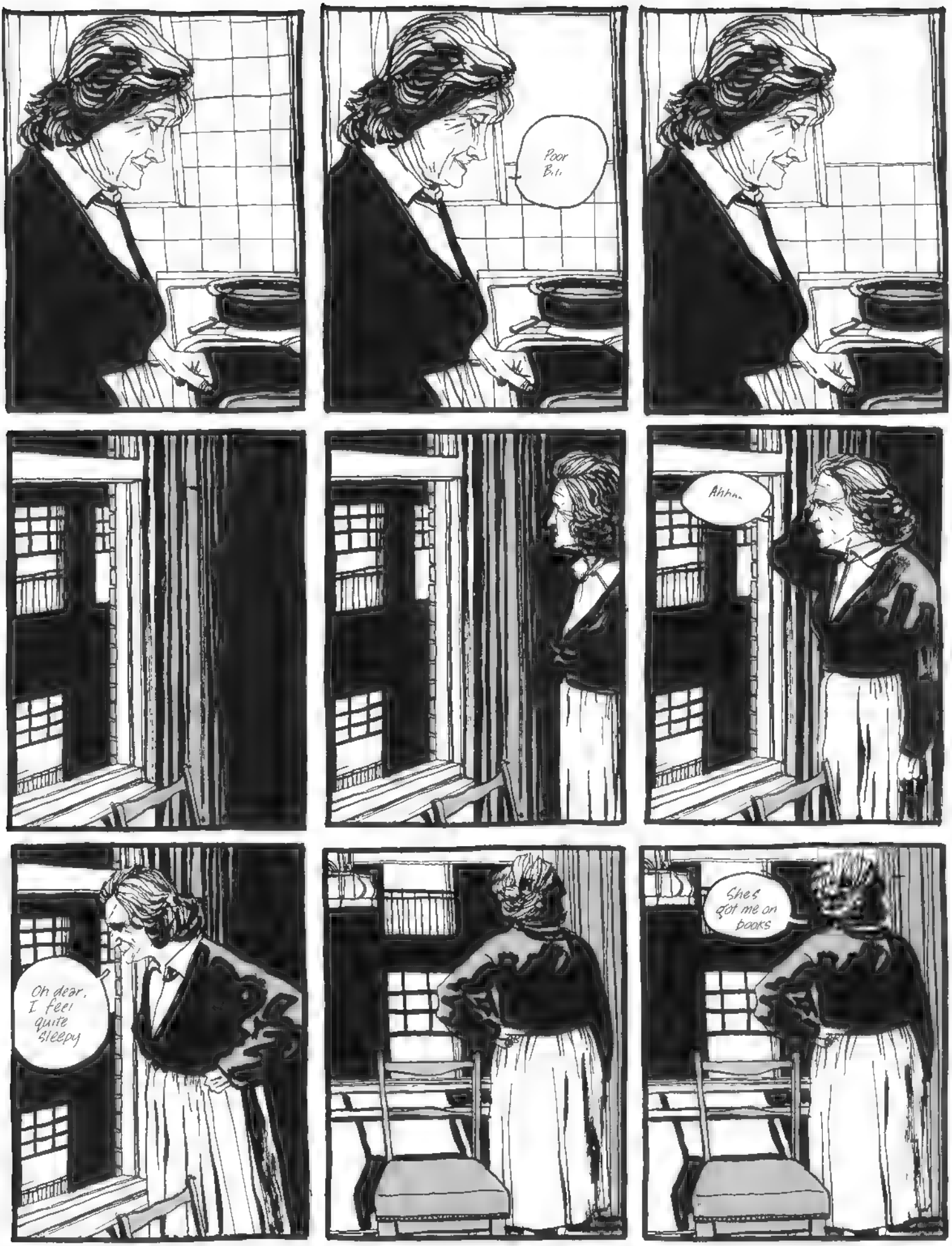
Mind you, that was a laugh Ramblin's of old men, he used to say, "That book, ramblin's of old men"
We used to talk about religion and that, a bit you know when he was, you know, had his dicky valves an that
The first time he had trouble with it, you weren't even an egg then
Not even an egg, ay?
He got the doctor over and sat 'im down, and he got 'im to draw a heart like that y'see?
He wanted him to draw it out so he could understand it
So I think it was 'is left ventricular, and he just wanted to understand it
He was okay after that for a bit
But he didn't believe in religion because of that, really he couldn't draw a picture of
'Ramblin's of old men' he'd say
But he was funny really

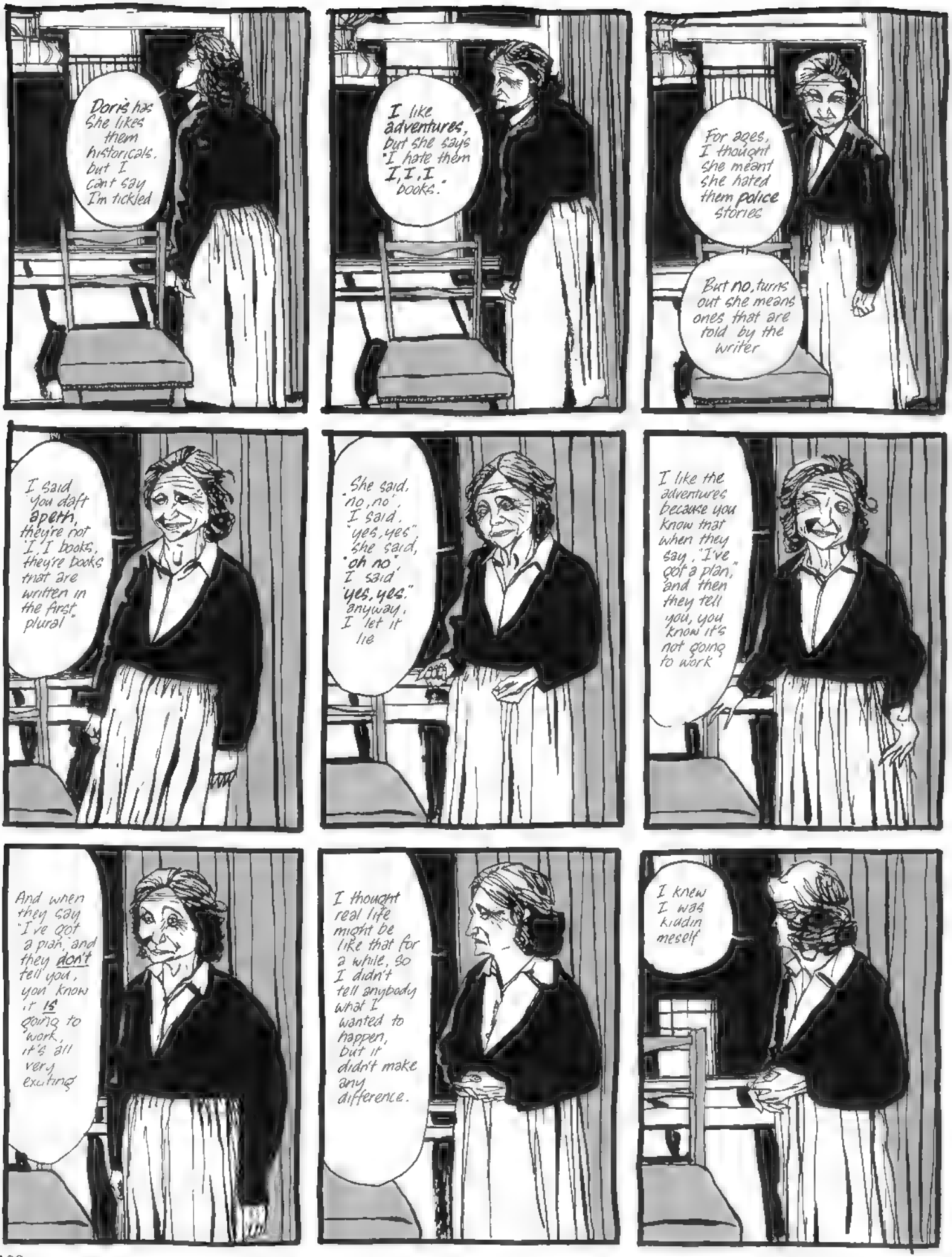
He was
Funny
I think later on he thought there was Something. He once said he thought there was something
Like a Super thing
Not a Super-human thing
A thing
Up there
Now me, I'm a believer I think a lot of it's mumbo-jumbo, but I'm a believer
You see, what I don't understand is like, when you get a... when a baby's born, when a new-born baby's born... or a bird , or anything small
Anything small
When a baby's born, everythings there
All its' fingers and fingernails and its'..everything. And all its' insides is all there
Everything
How does it know?
Where to put it all ?

And a plant? When a plant comes up and, like a tree, all its leaves fall and then it grows again in or it comes up again in the spring it's amazing. Isn't it?
That's what I don't understand It's just amazing.
I'm always amazed at anything that happens
"Rose coloured spectacles," that's what Bill'd say Rosey as a ruddy turkey-cock
"I'm only ever amazed when people don't turn out to be complete and utter," y'know, an' he'd swear
He's had a rough time of it, has Bill
He doesn't like me to know, but I notice, I'm not completely stupid
Just like me dad Silly males
"I'm fine," he'd say, 'jus' them bulgers at work tryin' to send me to an early grave"

"They all want payin a fortune for doin' bugger all, but I'll cope," he'd say
Then he'd get a rash all in his hair, or his feet would burn or his hands'd shake and I'd worry
"They want the cake, the ha'penny and the bloody toffee," he'd say
He's had a rough time of it, has your dad
All his life buried in a job he never wanted

Course that was his dads fault
My dad may have been a rough diamond, but at least he had a heart
Bill's dad was a total and complete chauvinistic of the first order And he was cruel
Ruined our wedding he did
Wouldnt let Bill be an architect which was what he wanted "He'll get a bloody white-collar job like everybody else," he said
The more time went by, the iller Bill'd get, then he'd panic and hang on to his job even more because "Who'd hire a sick man", he'd say
Oh dear what a curfuffle
So I think Bill's had the child well and truely crushed out of him


Poor B..
Ahhm..
Oh dear, I feel quite sleepy
She's got me on books


Doris has She likes them historicals, but I can't say I'm tickled
I like adventures, but she says "I hate them I,I,I books."
For ages, I thought she meant she hated them police stories
But no, turns out she means ones that are told by the writer
I said "you daft apeth, they're not 'I' books, they're books that are written in the first plural"
She said, "no, no", I said, "yes, yes" she said, "oh no", I said "yes, yes." anyway, I let it lie
I like the adventures because you know that when they say, "I've got a plan," and then they tell you, you know it's not going to work
And when they say "I've got a plan," and they don't tell you, you know it is going to work, it's all very exciting
I thought real life might be like that for a while, so I didn't tell anybody what I wanted to happen, but it didn't make any difference.
I knew I was kiddin meself

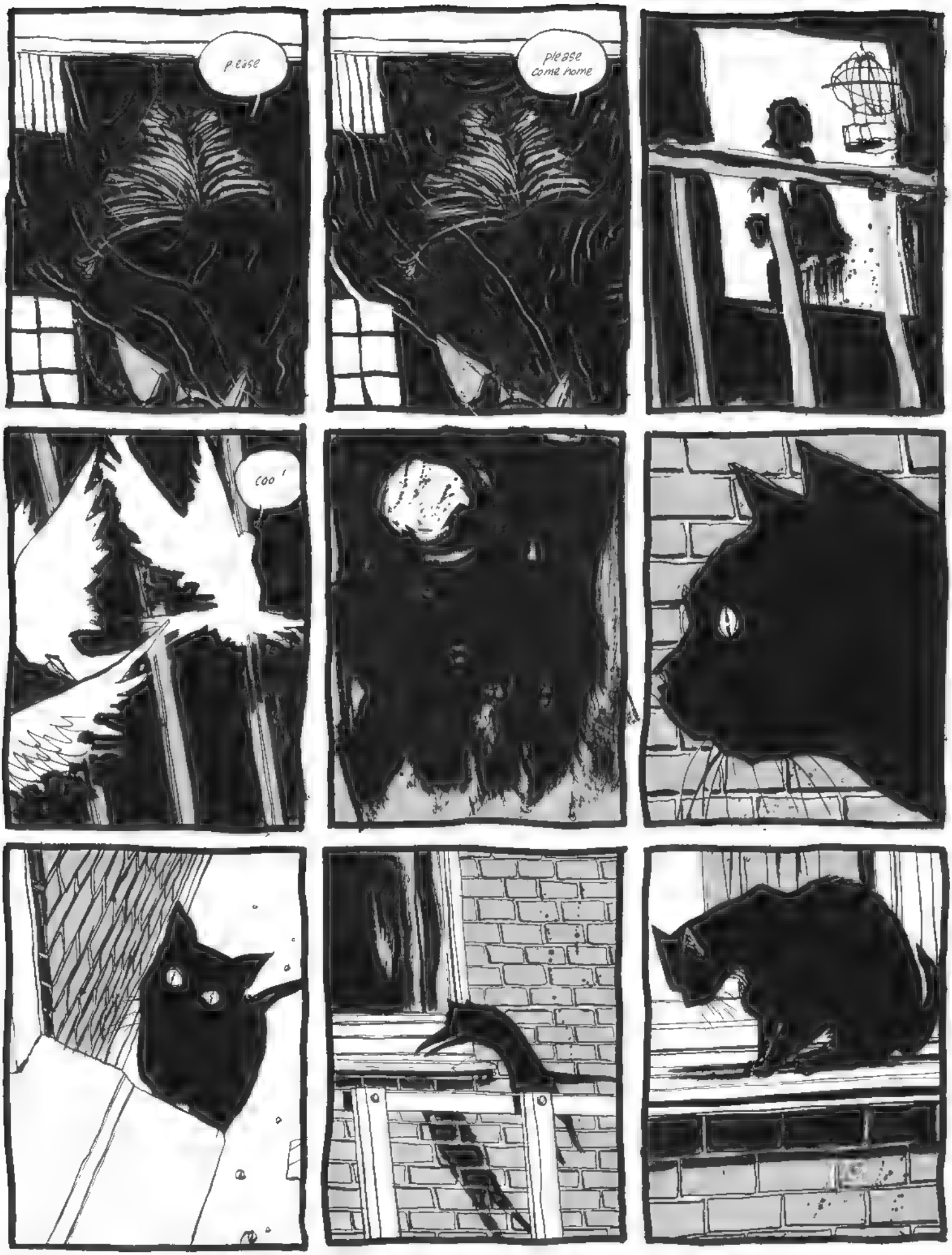
Life's not like books
You can always look down at the number and see how long you've got to go with a book
Not like Margaret Thenet at school
One minute she was happy as a daffy in the breeze the next, dead as a doorknob, struck by lightning
We were all of us shocked and shaken by that one
Poor little Kiddy looked like an apple she did Didn't deserve that
Mind you, her mother used to wear peace
Dear, it's getting on
I was going to have a read in bed
KAW! YOU DAFT APETIT

I was. He's gone and told them the plan, so somethings up. I said, "Don't be a mug" I said "Get all your men together and just keep mum. Have a jam buttie and a cuppa tea and get on to the next chapter", but no, they never listen.
OH MY GOD!
Oh shush you
He'll have to let himself in when he comes.
I hope he's all right
I always worry
If he weren't so highly strung. That's what my mum said when I took him home "he's a nice boy," she said, "but God he's highly strung."
Still, I try and make things easy. I keep everything dusted and spick and span.
YOU DAFT APE!!!
I'm not, it's important.
For
for when he comes home

He'll be back soon
Bill's not home yesterday
Bill's not home day before yesterday.
Bill's not home last week
How long since he came home?
How long since he came home?
Five years
No!
Five years, three months four days.
That's a lie
Never even said goodbye, and you know why
No

He was bored SHITLESS!
You bored him shitless, he hated this STUPID little life. He needed CHANGE. He buggered off and left you, you STUPID BITCH, he buggered off and he didn't even say goodbye.
He didn't even say goodbye
Why would he do that?
STUPID BITCH
Shut up!
KAW! WHAT a BUGGER.
Shut up, shut up

Supposed to be bright tomorrow. I'll
Wonder where that stupid recipe's gone
Rains pretty on the
Oh please Bill


p ease
please come home
coo !

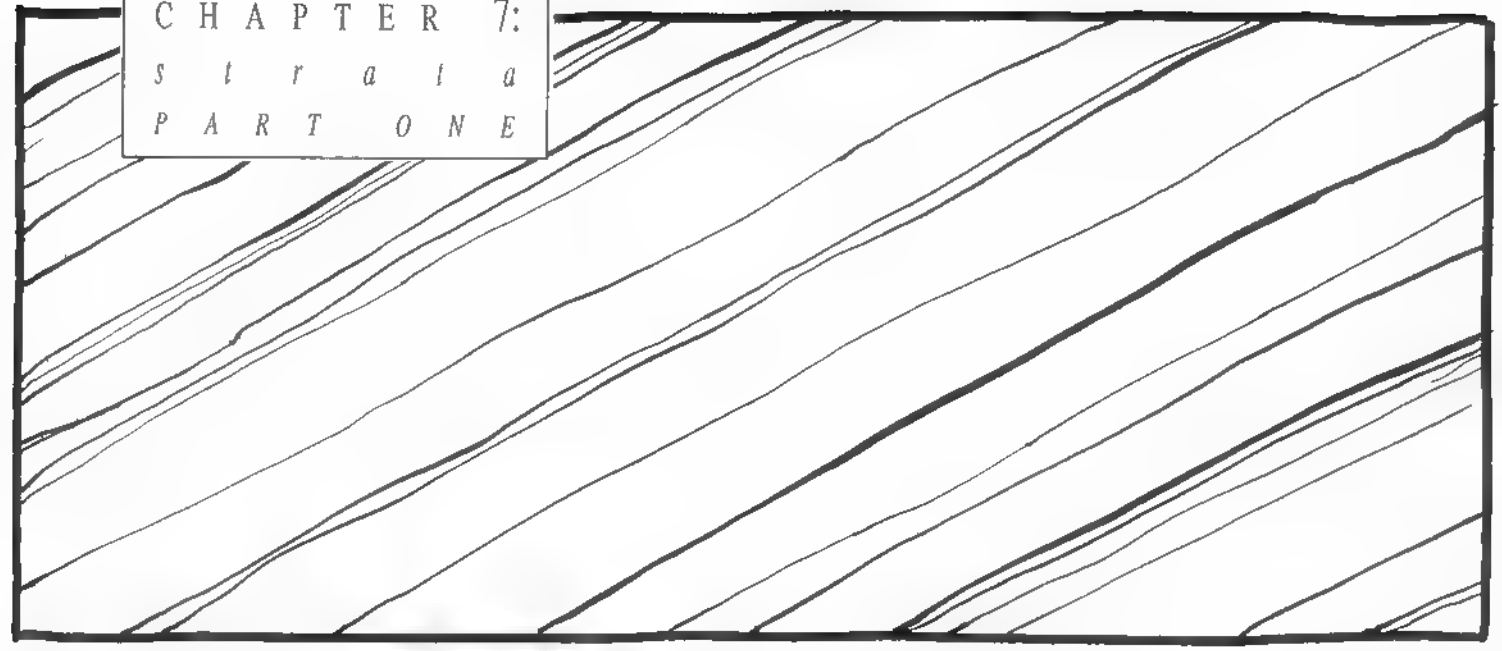
Jesus, cat, what are you walking on, thin air?
So, how are you going to get down again hmm?

Cant turn round
Cant fly
You could jump and hope 2 pigeon breaks your fall
No?
Okay, you want to come in?
Okay
Whayoooops.

Careful, nearly lost all nine of you in one go, then
Au?
There you are.
Nice and safe in here

coo
coo
coo
coo
coo
coo, coo
coo
ratatouille
coo?

CHAPTER 7:
strata
PART ONE



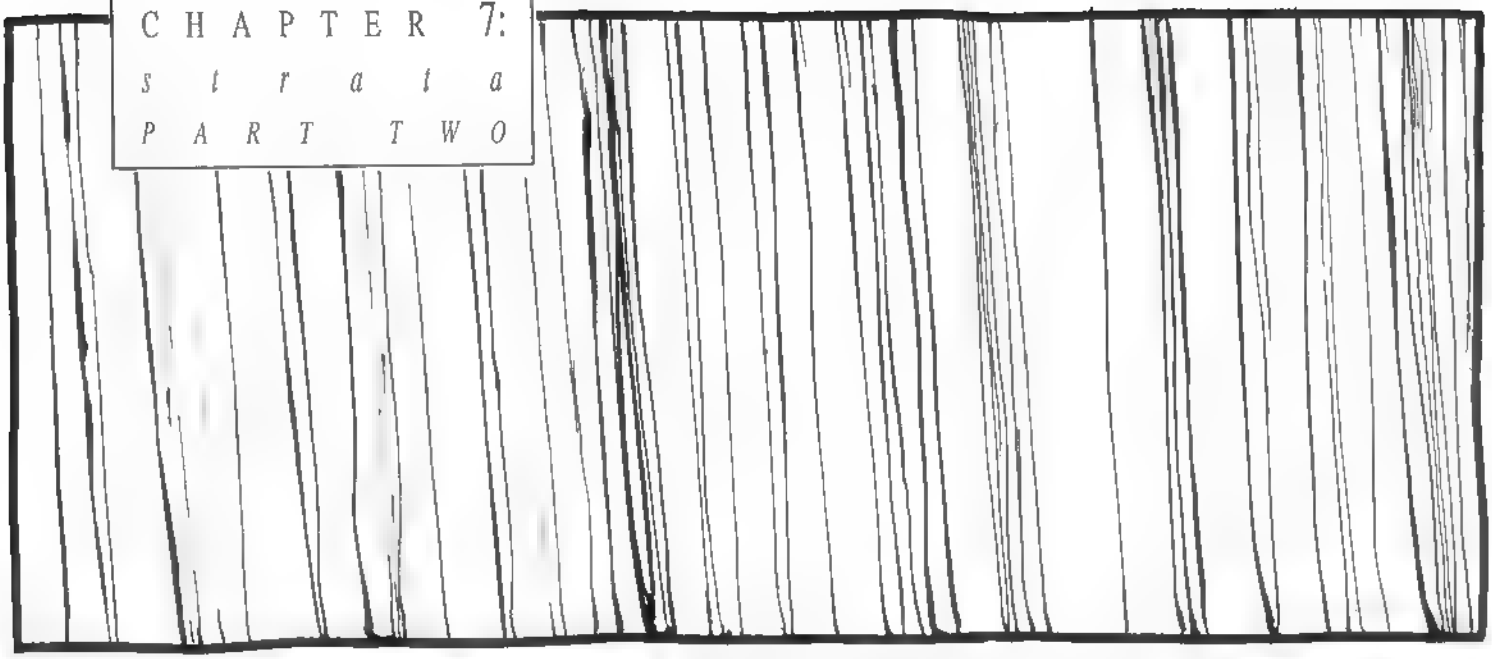
COO
COO

We ain't open yet
Hmm?
You're too early, I've got to open the bar an' shit

That's okay
Well, there's nothin I can do about it, we ain't open yet
That's fine when do you open?
We open when we open
CL

CLOSED
OPEN
KATAKUMBE CLU
OPEN

CHAPTER 7:
strata
PART TWO



Dedication
For my wife Ellen for criticism and hugs, two things I couldn't live without

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GODS GREEN EYE - Jon
the philosophy of arbitrariness

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the philosophy of arbitrariness

WHITE WORDS - Jonath

ODS GREEN EYE - Jona

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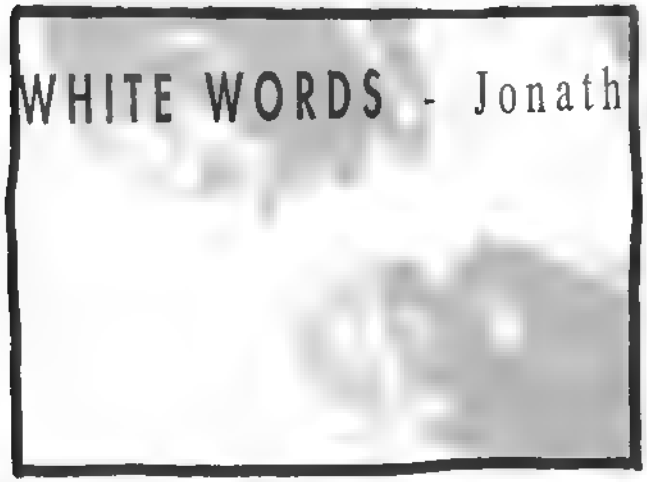
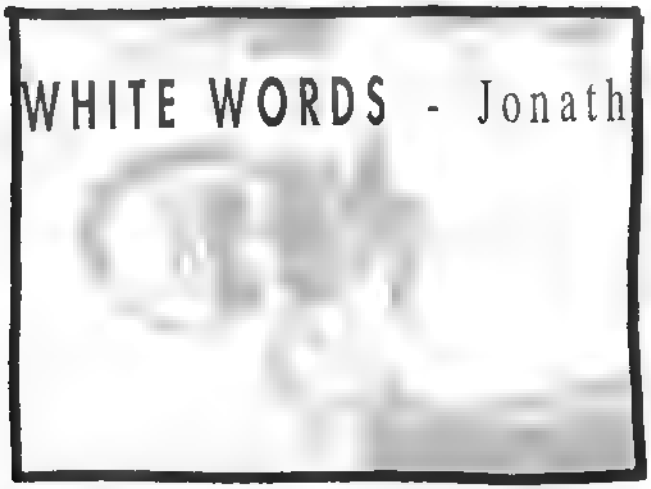
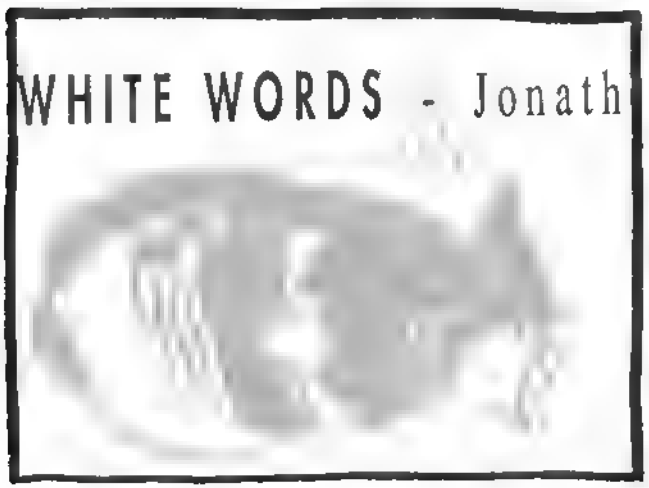

WHITE WORDS - Jonath

KODO
Jonathan Rush


WHITE WORDS - Jonath

GAZES


WHITE WORDS - Jonath

KODO
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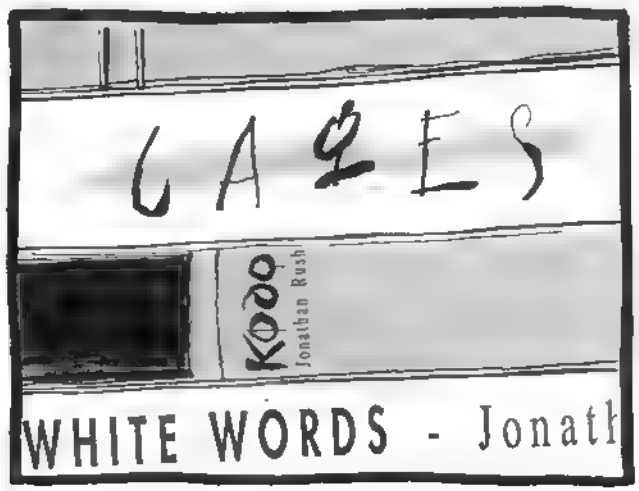
GODS GREEN EYE - Jon
the philosophy of arbitrariness


GAZES
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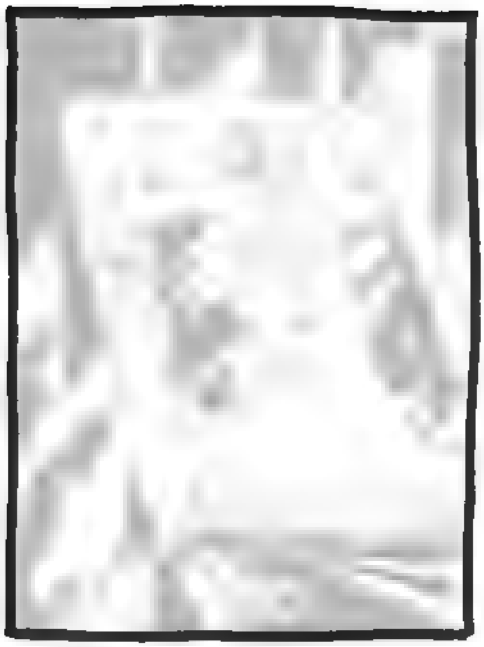
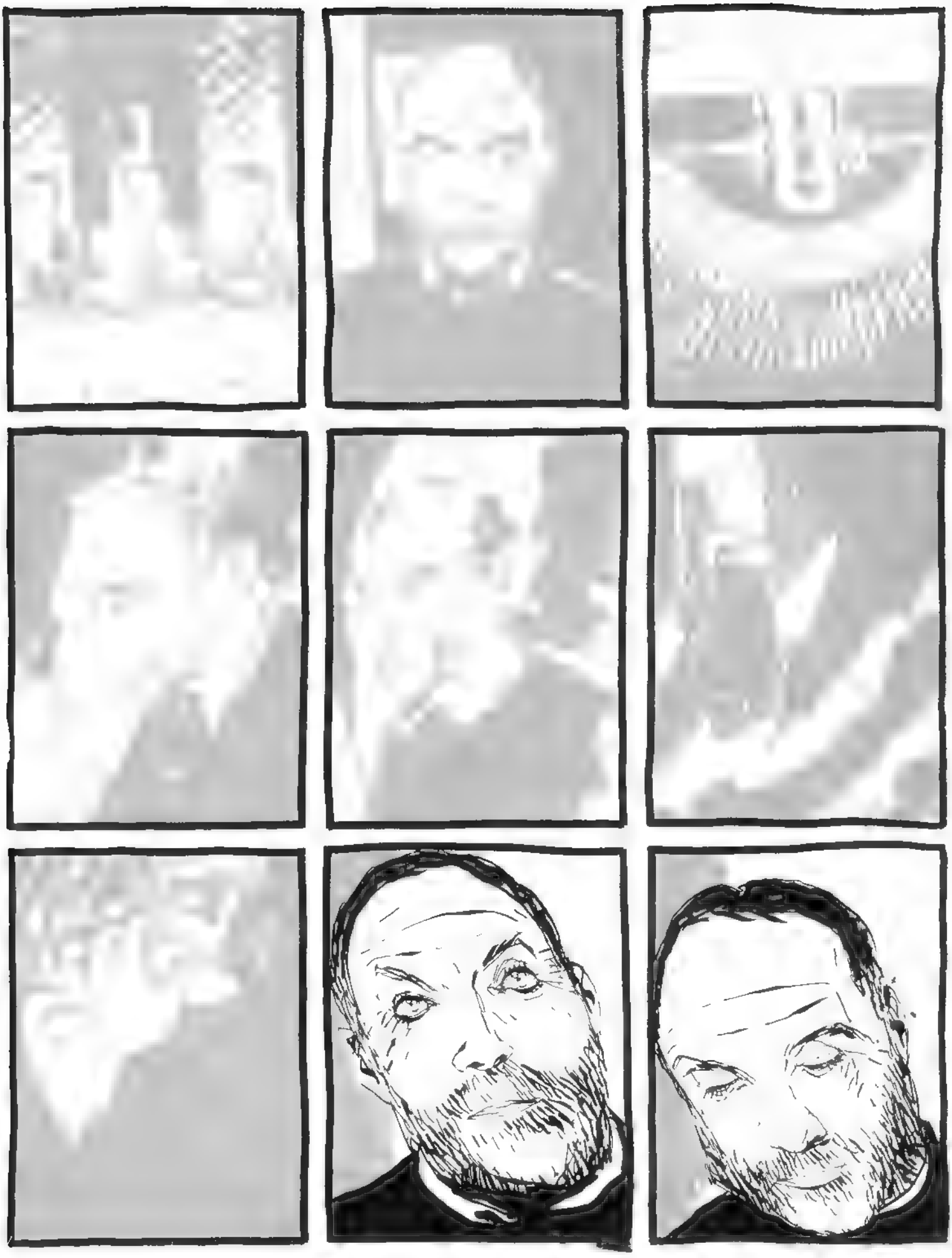


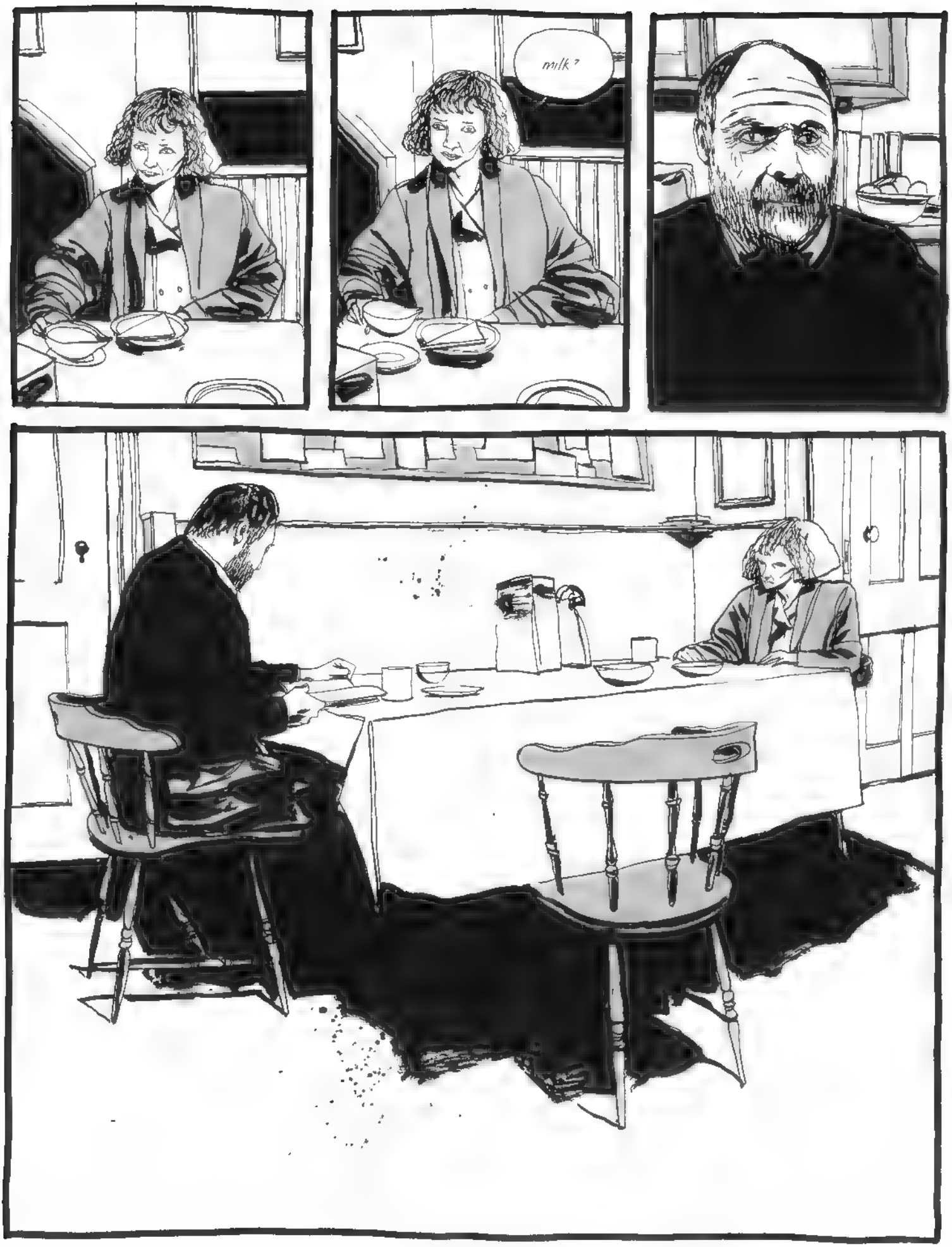


WHITE WORDS - Jonathan
ODS GREEN EYE - Jonatha
KODO
Jonathan Rush
Rush

BEHIND the FIRE

Jonathan
YOU MAY ONLY KEEP WHAT CANNOT CONSOLE YOU

Jonathan
SHIT!
What?


milk?

CHAPTER 7:
strata
PART THREE

A friend asked me to return your book
Ah a
He would have given it back himself
Ahmm
Only he's over there grinning
So do you spy on your other neighbours too?
Son of a

Heh erm
Or just me?
Ah
May I sit down?
Sure
Thanks
Hah nah neh
I'm speechless

I can tell
No really I you know someone should throw some cold water over me really
Karen
Leo
So Come here often?
Heh I'm I ust
I'm too stunned to string words together

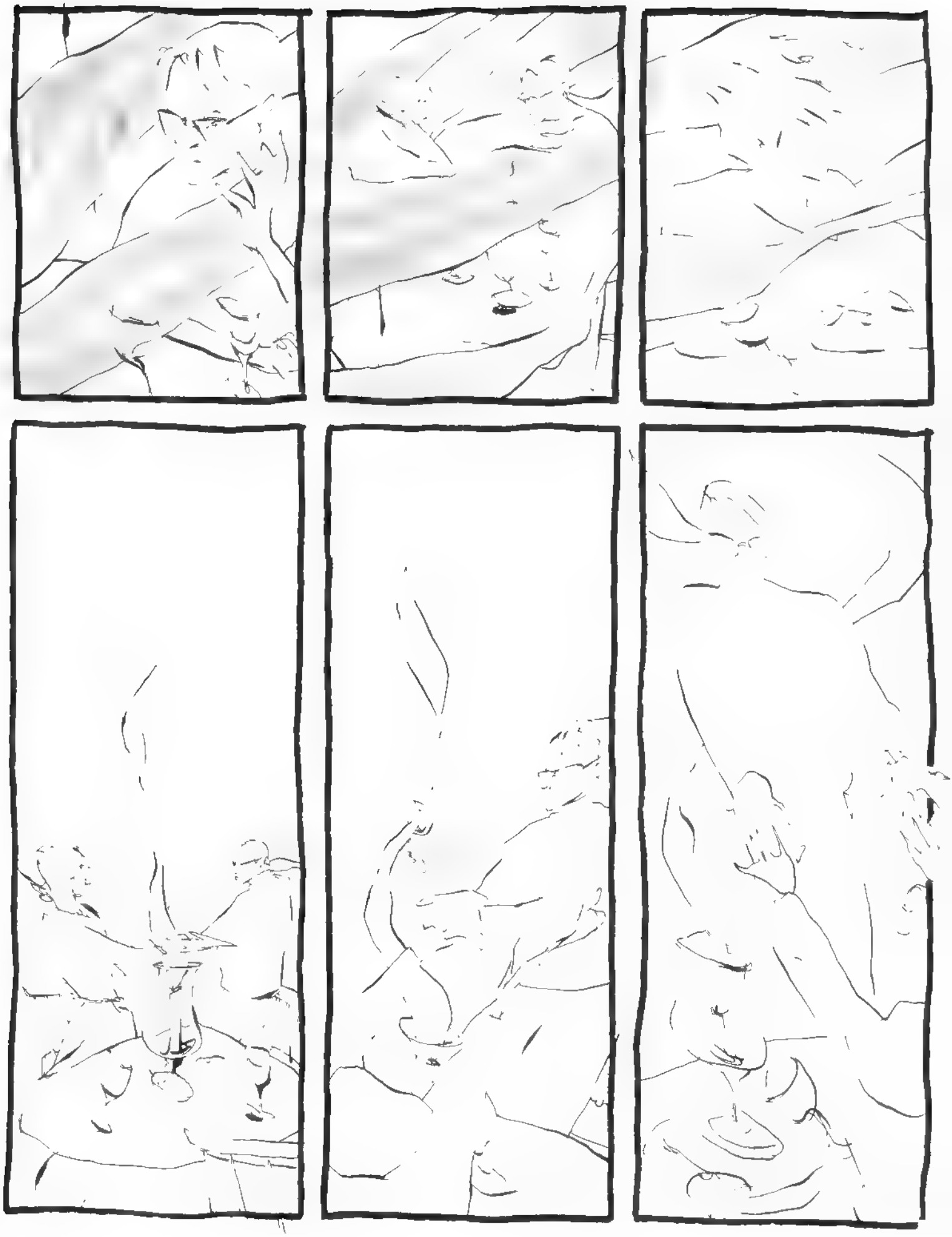
I dont, I really don't just you know go around peeking in peoples' windows all the time. It's just you're right opposite
and I've sort of got used to you coming out on the balcony to water your flowers and you're just there and. I suppose I'm trying to just make a record of things that are important to me now
feel free to stop me any time, you know?
No no. I'm keen to see just how rad you can go
I need a drink, you want a drink? I mean don't have one just because I
Wine
Whine?
Wine
Wine sure, good choice I like wine
Christ. listen to me I've forgotten all the words I've learned since I was six
I'll get the drinks

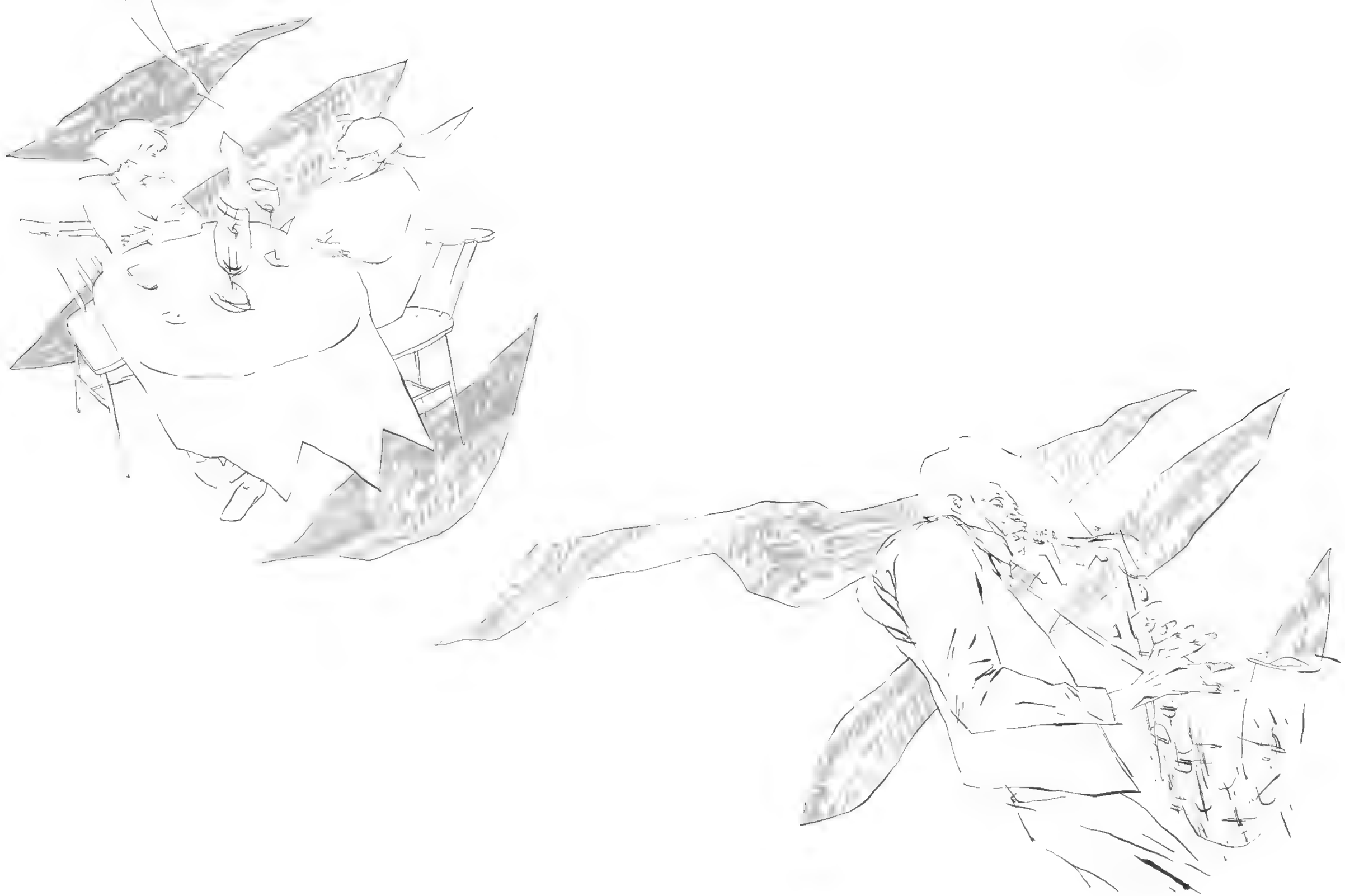
Here you go
Look, I hope you don't mind about this
I feel like a pervert, or some sort of nasty, horrible, prurient little
Again, you can stop me at any time

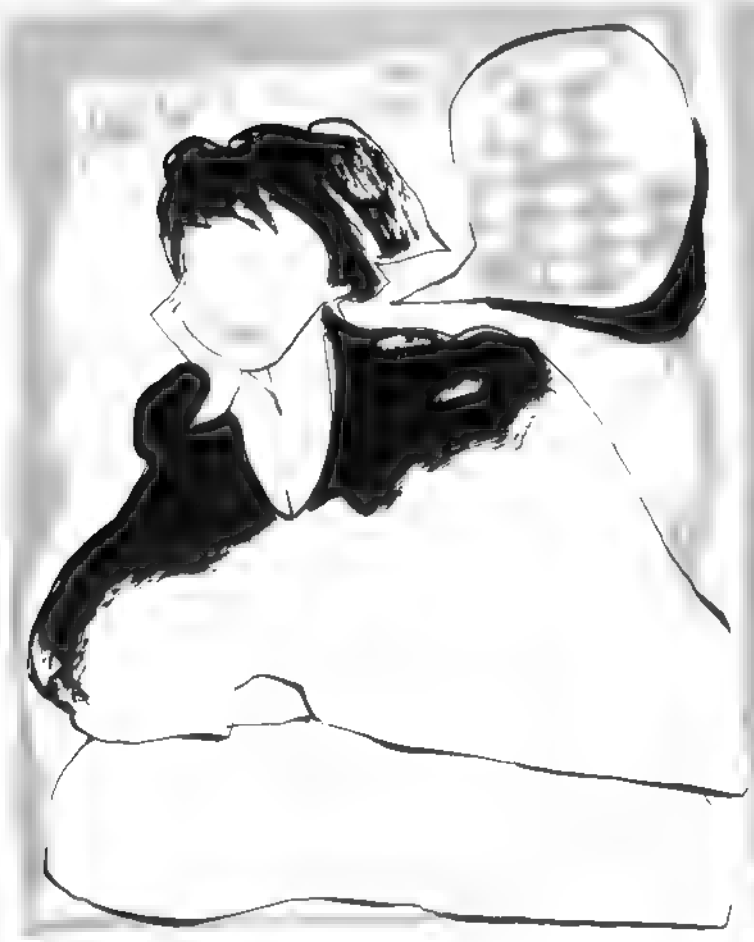
I liked the drawing
You did?
Yes. It had a sensitive quality
What happened to your face?
Hmm? Oh, yeah
I stopped these two guys harassing a little girl
Really?
Yeah, I shouted 'hey' and went towards them, and you know, I was a big hero for about five seconds
and then I felt this guy's fist come out the back of my head, and I hit the deck

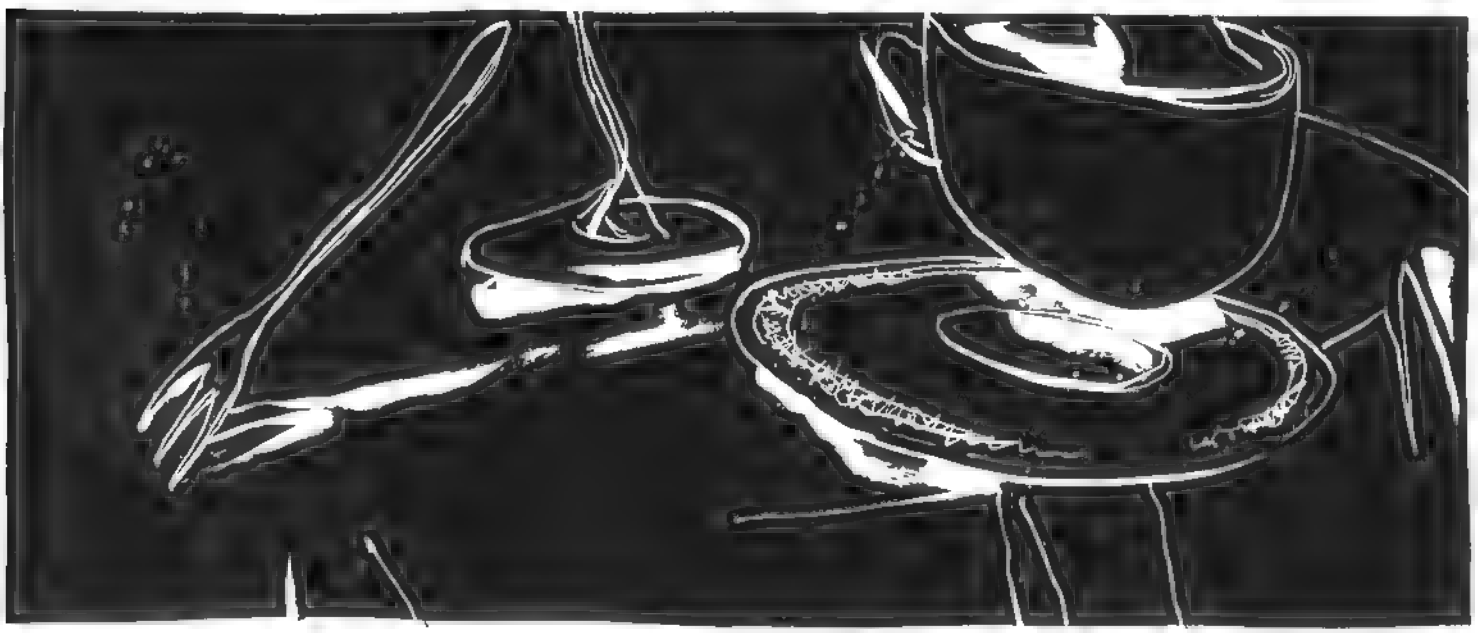
That's pretty brave
That's pretty dumb There was something odd about the kid anyway, so I don't know
They were just about to let their dog burn me in the flowerbed, when this cat saved my life
A cat? That's pretty funny
Funny?
Yeah, I mean, being saved by a pussy cat, ha ha heh
Yeah, heh, hilarious
So who were these guys, anyway?
Steroid-induced art critics? I don't know

Hah hah hah ha ha heh he heh
So are you working on anything major?
Anything major? Well, I'm trying to paint this portrait
It's not really happening at the moment I'm trying to pull a face out of deliberately abstract marks
How did you arrive at that?
Well, I was working on a series of fractured heads and you really want to know?
Sure
Okay, God, I could talk all night about my painting





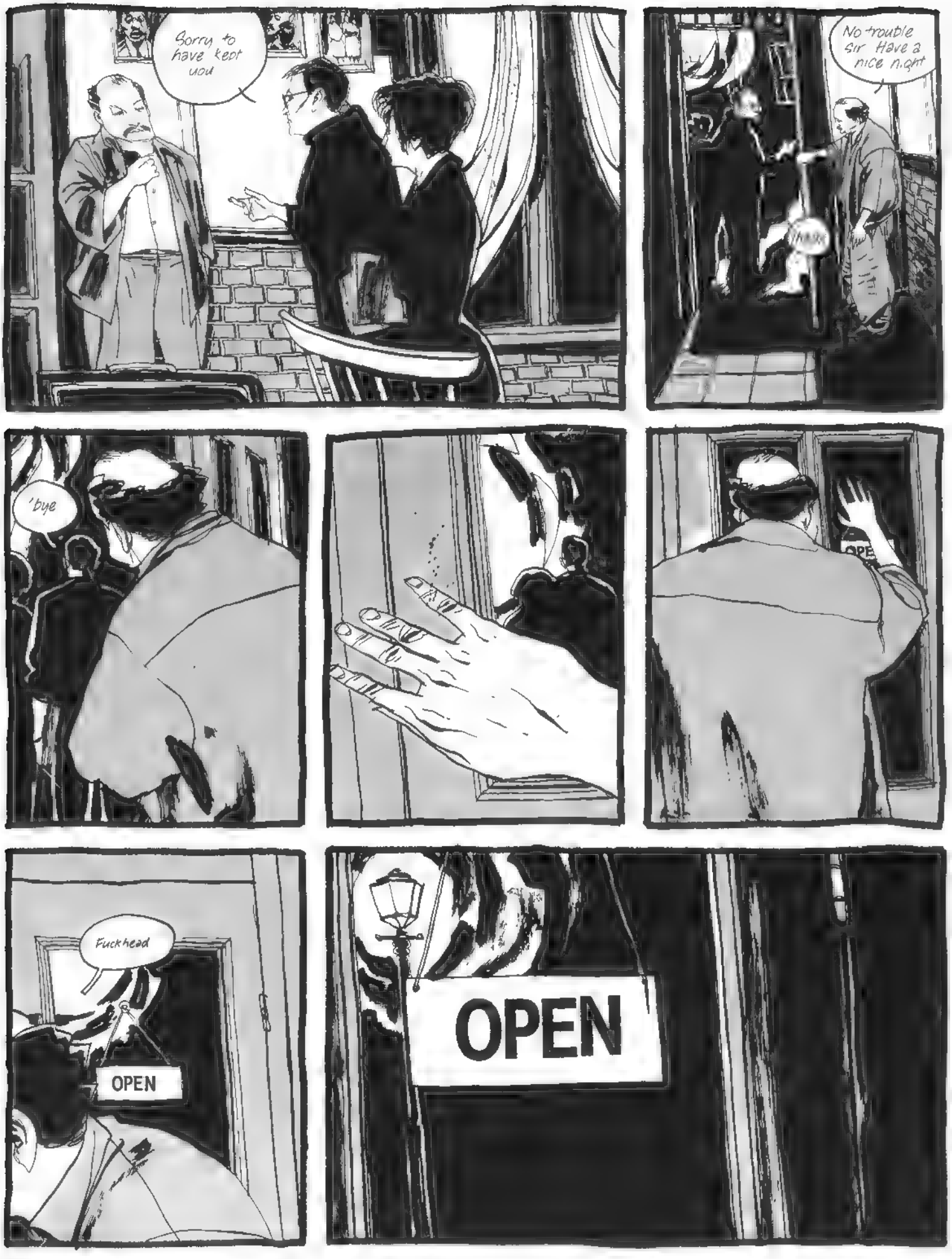




God, what time is it?
Ahm, half two
Half past two? Jesus, where'd the time go?

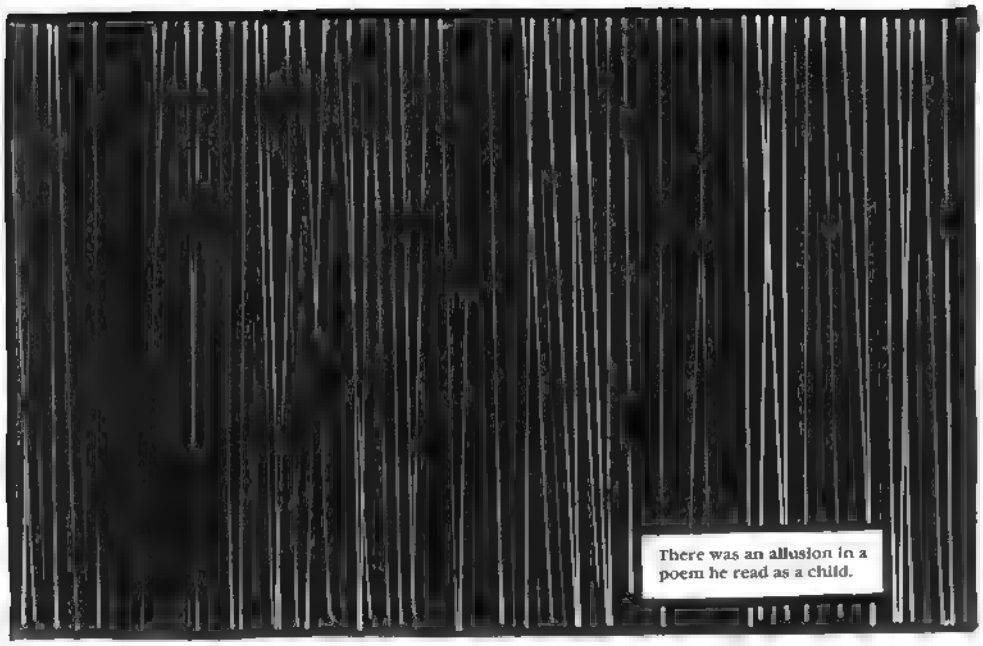
We're the last to leave
Ahuhrumhuh
Koff, koff. hurrm
Do you think he wants us to leave?
No, no, probably just a bit of sarcasm gone down the wrong way
Kah, Kahhharummmmhuh.
Come on, we should go
Yeah, so hey, were you serious about sitting for me? I mean, was that the wine talking?

No, no. I was serious
Just so long as I don't end up with both eyes on the same side, or something
No I always thought cubism was for squares
Oh my God, bad art jokes, who've I got mixed up with?
Sorry
No, I'm more of a 'topological neo-realist
You can get a lotion for that
I try to paint things essentially figuratively
But, if it looks wrong, then it was meant to look like that

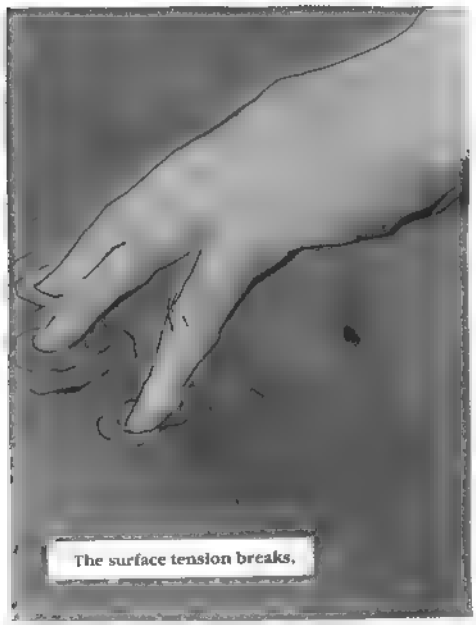

Sorry to have kept you
No trouble sir Have a nice night
'bye
Fuckhead
OPEN
OPEN

Have we started yet?
Hello?
Yeah, I'm just wiping the canvas down
Does that involve me sitting still at all?
Not really, no
Good, my left leg's gone to sleep
Ahh.
Is that better?

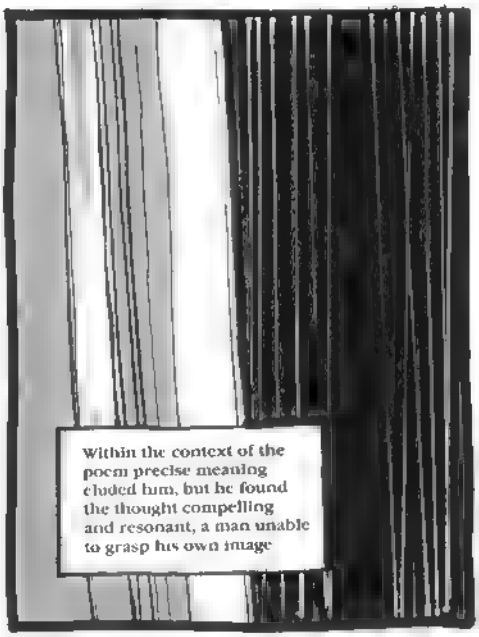
Much better
Actually, I'm ready for you now
Okay, hang on. I'm just getting my circulation going again
Okay, how's that?
Sit back a bit
There.
Okay? Are we actually, honest-to-Godly starting now?
Yes
CHAPTER 7:
strata
PART FOUR

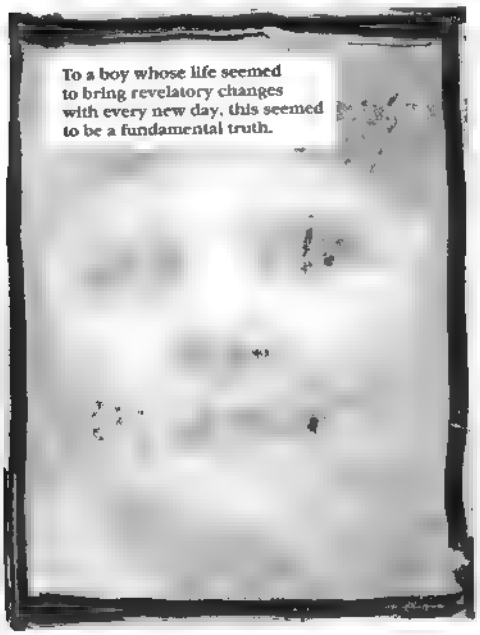

There was an allusion in a poem he read as a child.

He remembered a magical image, a man looking into a pond, reaches toward his reflection.


The surface tension breaks,

his arm tangential and foreshortened, cannot touch his reflected face.


Within the context of the poem precise meaning eluded him, but he found the thought compelling and resonant, a man unable to grasp his own image


To a boy whose life seemed to bring revelatory changes with every new day, this seemed to be a fundamental truth.

Now, with the process of learning flagging from the hell for leather time of teenage to the gradual adagio of later years,
THIS QUIET STORM
Geoff Reuben

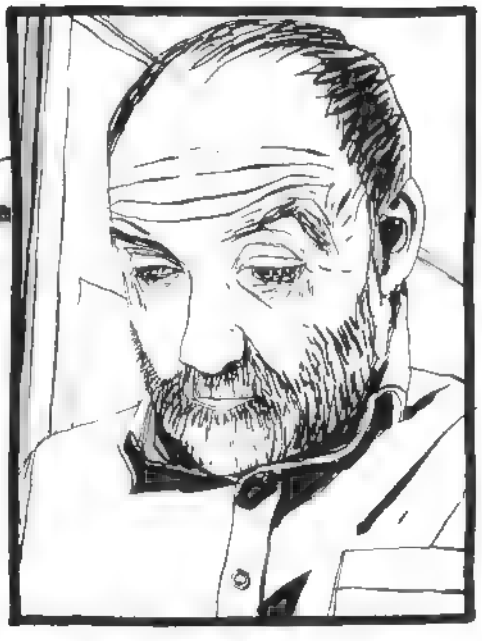
with the many flailing loose-ends of his life buffeted by circumstance, out of his control,

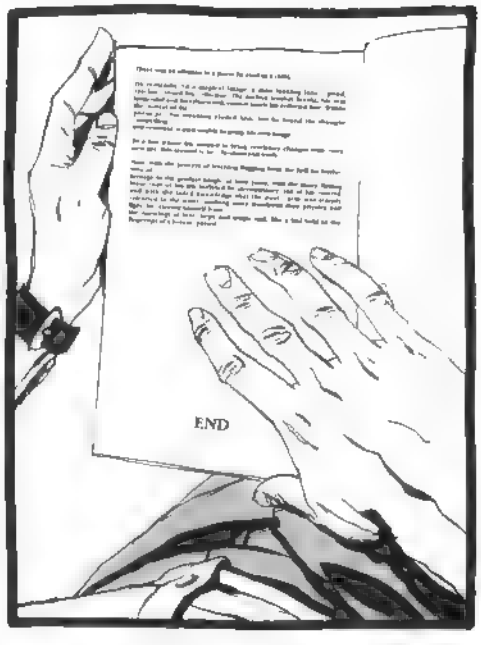
and with the jaded knowledge that the poet's arm was simply refracted in the water, nothing more wondrous than physics and light,

he released himself from the moorings of love, hope and magic

and, like a leaf held in the fingertips of a breeze,

passed.



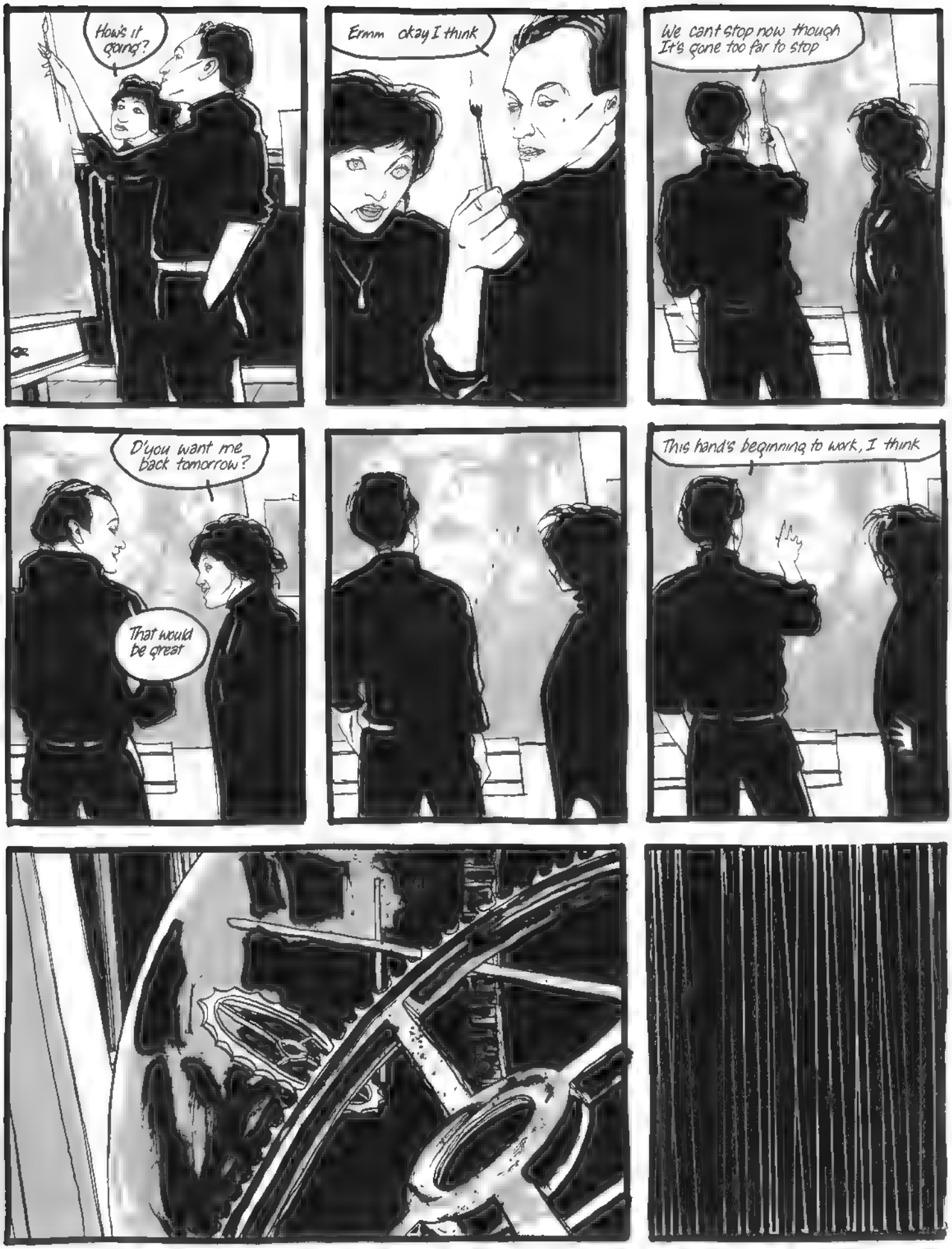

END

Did you finish?

Hmm? Oh yes

Any good?
Well he wears his influences a little loudly, he has a tendency towards fashionable pessimism
But on the whole quite a remarkable book
You liked it?
Remarkable
Who is it again?
Erm Geoff Reuben Never heard of him Apparently his first novel
Are you going to review it?
Heh. And give it the kiss of death?
Oh come on. Why would they send you books to review if they didn't value your opinion?
They're humouring me
Oh really, Jonathan, I I give up with you.

That tickles, what are you doing?
Can I stretch a minute?
Sure


How's it going?
Erm okay I think
We can't stop now though It's gone too far to stop
D'you want me back tomorrow?
That would be great
This hand's beginning to work, I think

What are you on?
I'm proofreading the last of the non-fiction
Any good?
Interesting. I hope they proof the Latin names themselves, because I've no idea if they're right.
Hmm
Well, I'll write this review, then
Okay
Right

Hello black cat
Are you still a happy black cat?
How's that?
I'll leave the window open for you again tonight, okay?
You're a happy yet lonely little animal aren't you, black cat?
I think I catch a glimpse of your secrets occasionally when you look at me

I don't know
You're my last secret, black cat My life is public property. I miss my secrets.
What do you miss?
I'll get the lights
click
Jesus
You live here? This is unbelievable

When you said you were a botanist, I pictured you surrounded by, you know, little petunias and stuff.
I'm glad you like it.
This is a long term project, I'm only the latest in a long line of
You know, I know nothing about you
There's not much to tell
Come on, give me all the personal, embarrasing stuff first
Well, my favourite colour's blue
Secrets, huh?

Okay, let's try this. Imagine you're walking through a forest.
I am
Alone. Imagine you're walking through a real forest alone
What is this, artist, raconteur and amateur psychologist?
Imagine
Okay
What's the forest like?
Trees
What's the weather like?

Ahm pretty sunny kind of hazy God, I miss the sun, it's always raining here
Okay, so as you're walking, you come to a fork in the path On your right there's a brightly lit straight path leading up through the trees
Okay
On the left there's a narrow, winding, shadowy path, you can just see leading down into the trees
Okay
Which one do you choose?
Oh, the windy path definitely
Okay So you take that path and continue into the woods
As you're walking, you see ahead of you a container of some sort

A container? What kind?
You tell me
Okay ahm, well, I think it's a bottle
Describe it to me
It's an old bottle frosted glass. Ornate label like an old wine or sherry or something
Is it open?
Ahm it has been opened, but now it's corked again
Is there anything inside?
Yes, there's liquid and something else Something solid
Describe it.
I can't see it properly The liquid is translucent and the glass is frosted, so I can't see it properly It won't come out either
Do you take it with you?
No
Okay Anything else?
No.

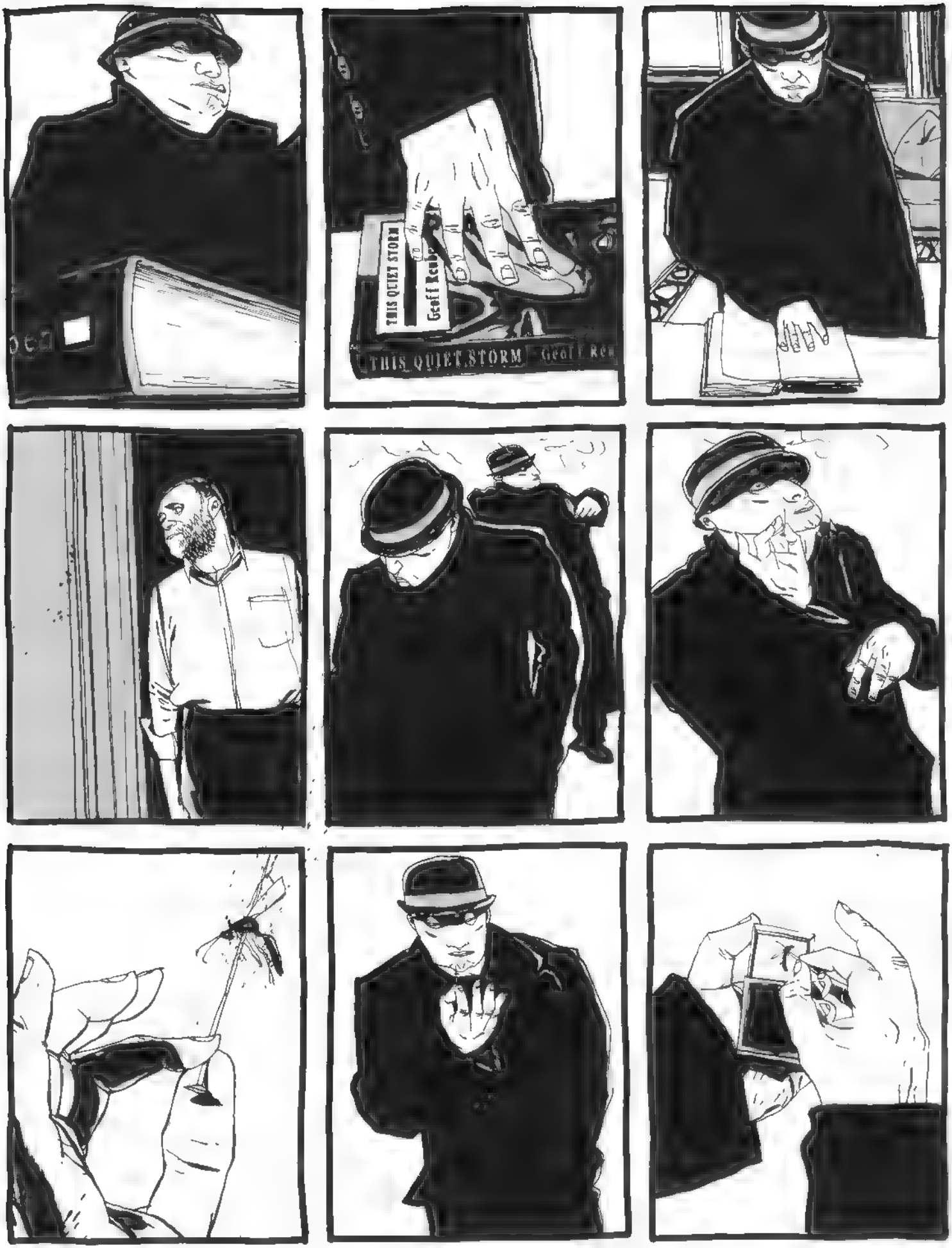
So you keep walking
You reach a clearing and there's some water.
A waterfall
Uh, huh
I love waterfalls. High and noisy. Rainbows cutting through the spray
What do you do?
I walk under it
You get wet?
Soaked

Heh okay
What?
No, fine, fine
Okay, you finally reach the end of the forest. What do you see marking the end of the trees
Erm I see a stone wall
Describe it
It's granite Thick and old It has ivies and vines growing over parts of it.
Is it high
No

Can you get passed it?
Sure. There's a stone step. It's easy to climb over.
Okay, what's over the other side?
I step over the wall. I stand on the top. I can see for miles.
What do you see?
I can see a field. It stretches to the horizon. Fresh grass.
There is a large house.
A house?
Yes, a mansion. Pillars and neatly cut hedges. There's nobody around.
Do you go toward the house?

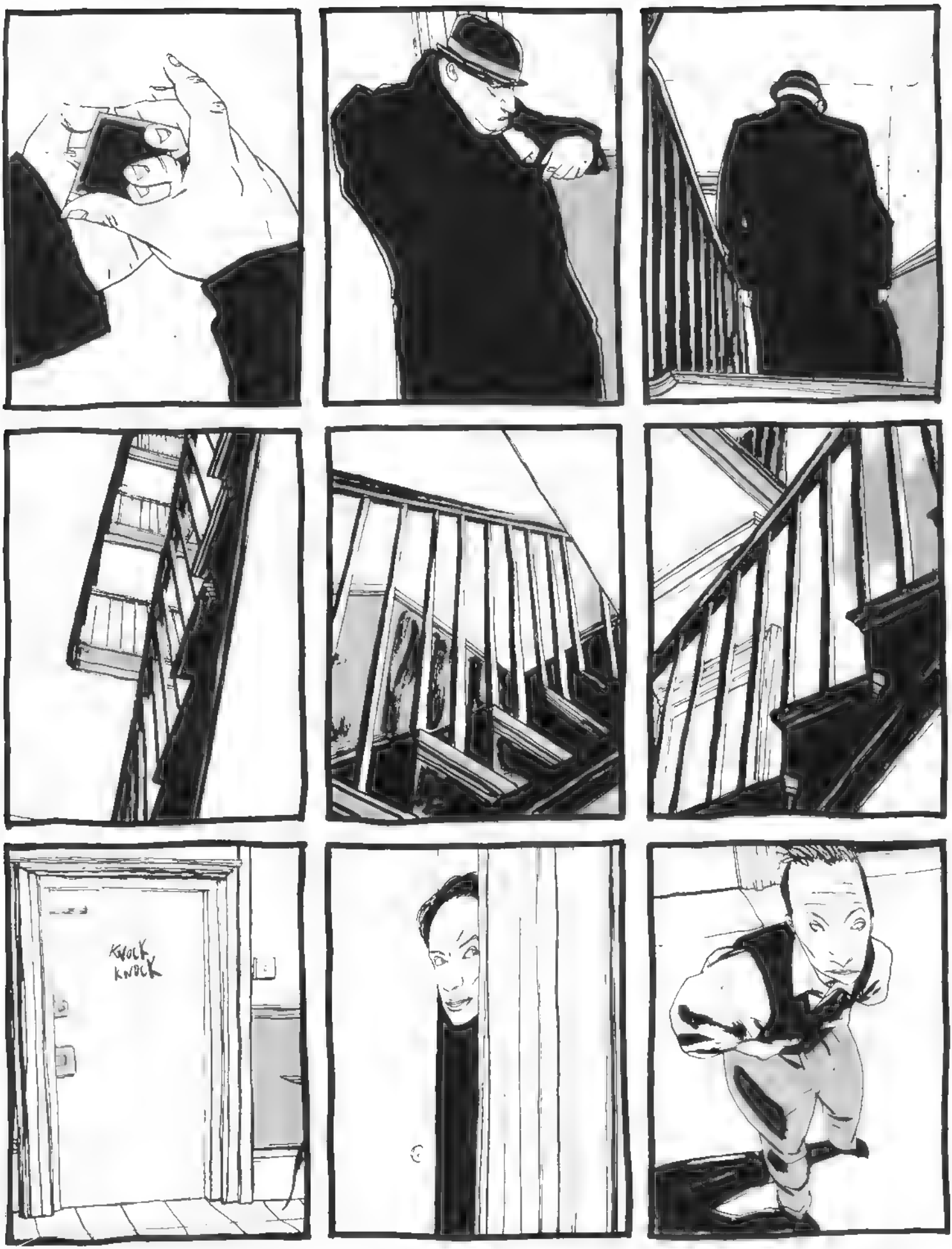
No
Why not?
I don't belong there It's not my house I walk into the field
Well doc, can I be cured?
Heh no it's interesting
So?
So?
So, tell me what I just said?
Well I'd say your favourite colour was blue
Come on
Okay The forest is supposed to be your general demeanor
Uh huh
The straight, brightly lit path is 'ambitious and driven', the windy, shadowy path is 'curious and fatalistic'
Possibly

The container represents your problems and how you deal with them
Hmm
Mean anything to you?
What, the the bottle and the thing I couldn't see?
Yes
Ahm well
The water represents your sex life
HAH!
Which we'll come back to later
You wish
The wall is death
Beyond the wall are your hopes and fears of what could be beyond death


THIS QUIET STORM
Geoff Rob
THIS QUIET STORM Geoff Rob

Do you ever finish a painting?
An occasionally wise, but usually just obtuse old man once told me, a painting is never finished
It merely stops in interesting places
Where has it stopped at the moment?
I think it's got to the bottom of the street and just started wondering whether it remembered to lock the door and put the cat out
Is that an interesting place?
Heh

Of course, it's impossible.
What is?
Trying to make concrete what I can see in my head It's impossible
Well, you have to do one or two impossible things now and again Otherwise you get complacent
Absolutely right


KNOCK
KNOCK

Hello ?
CAN YOU TELL ME WHERE THE ARTIST IS KINDLY?
Ahm well I paint
THAT'S ME
Are you calling me ?
No, it's okay.
HEY !
Ahm

Have you got this guy's rabbit?
What?
CAN YOU TELL ME WHERE THE RABBIT IS KINDLY?
No, he's got the wrong card
You've got the wrong card
CAN YOU TELL ME WHERE THE RABBIT IS KINDLY?
ARTIST
CAN YOU TELL ME WHERE THE RABBIT IS KINDLY?
ARTIST

That's him
ME
Who is he?
I have no idea
CAN I HELP?
WHO ARE YOU?
WHO ARE YOU?

UNWETTED
Well?
He says his name's 'unwetted'
MERU GALLERIES
There's an art gallery here?
Apparently.

Is this
here, where'd he go?
Oh God, CAREFUL PLEASE
Ahh!
AHm
EXCUSE ME IS THIS HERE?

Yes, thank you, I have one already
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
Oh look, you're dropping nouns everywhere
HEY!
EXCUSE ME

You have a hole.
Here
OH
SHEEP
SOBBING
COLOURS
D'you think this is really going to be a sentence?
"The sheep are sobbing in colour"?
Don't encourage him
OH
SHEEP
I'VE LOST ALL
MY
SOBBING
COLOURS
HAH, HEH

You're welcome
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
I SHOULD LIKE TO
PURCHASE A
KINDLY
RABBIT
DRAWING
Ah!
Hey that's great!

Really? WHICH ONE?
YOUR CHOICE
My choice I don't get it.
HOW MUCH MONEY DO YOU CHARGE KINDLY?
How much? God, I don't know
Are the drawing's all the same price?
Well I don't know
What do you mean, you don't know? This strange but polite little man wants to give you money
They are for sale aren't they?
Sure
So?
So, I never thought I'd get to the stage where price would be an issue

Roughly.
I don't know fifty? forty?
TWO HUNDRED
What?
Have you got a pen?
You can't charge two hundred for a drawing.
Shhh
200
KINDLY

WAIT, WHICH ONE ?
YOUR CHOICE
BRING IT TOMORROW

I don't know
What's that?
I don't know I'm not sure about the motivations
Hmm?
In this book I'm not sure the characterization holds together The decisions they make seem contrived in places
I thought you liked it?
I do
I did. I don't know
Oh no, no
What?
Listen to what you're saying
What?
It's because of them isn't it?
No, I just thought

For God's sake, Jon, listen to yourself. You're changing your opinion because they didn't take the book.
Please, Jon PLEASE. Don't let their twisted little mind games get to you, or they've won!
What do you mean?
What do I mean? It's obvious. How many times have we been through this? They confiscate everything that you love. That's what we decided, what, six months ago?
Well, yes, but we have no proof.
It's the only pattern that makes sense. Anything that has some emotional value to you, they take. Even the notes they leave indicate that's what's happening.
Yes
So now, even though we have to stay here because we don't know who to trust, even though the things that once defined us are gone, even though there's no end in sight to this... puraah
Even then. we know what they're doing.
It's not a random, malicious, imponderable world any more it has structure, which means we can predict what will happen, which means we're back in control, at least to a certain extent

And now this.
Now they decide not to take this book
And now you're questioning your own judgement.
You're right of course, but.
NO... 'buts'
There was
an allusion to a child.
He remembered

Within the thought
foreshortened,
revelatory
he found
the many flailing loose-ends
of his every day,
every
every faded life
a face,
unable to grasp his own love,
leaf
The surface breaks,
resonant,
refracted
hell
The surface
tension

What's going on?
I'm choosing a piece for the gallery
You are?

How do you choose. The one that remains in one piece wins?
It's all shit. Karen There's not one drawing in the whole place that's worth a damn
Oh God, come on, calm down.
There's nothing here
I'll help.
Yeah? Okay, shred these
You're being ridiculous
Don't you think Iyaure being a little ridiculous?
Ridiculous? No, I'm being objective

How's the painting?
It sucks
I should have guessed
Well, look at it
It doesn't work It's not alive or considered or anything !
The drawing's scrappy and the space is shot to buggery
Well, you'll just have to jump out the window
Heh.
Oh GAHHHD
let's get drunk.

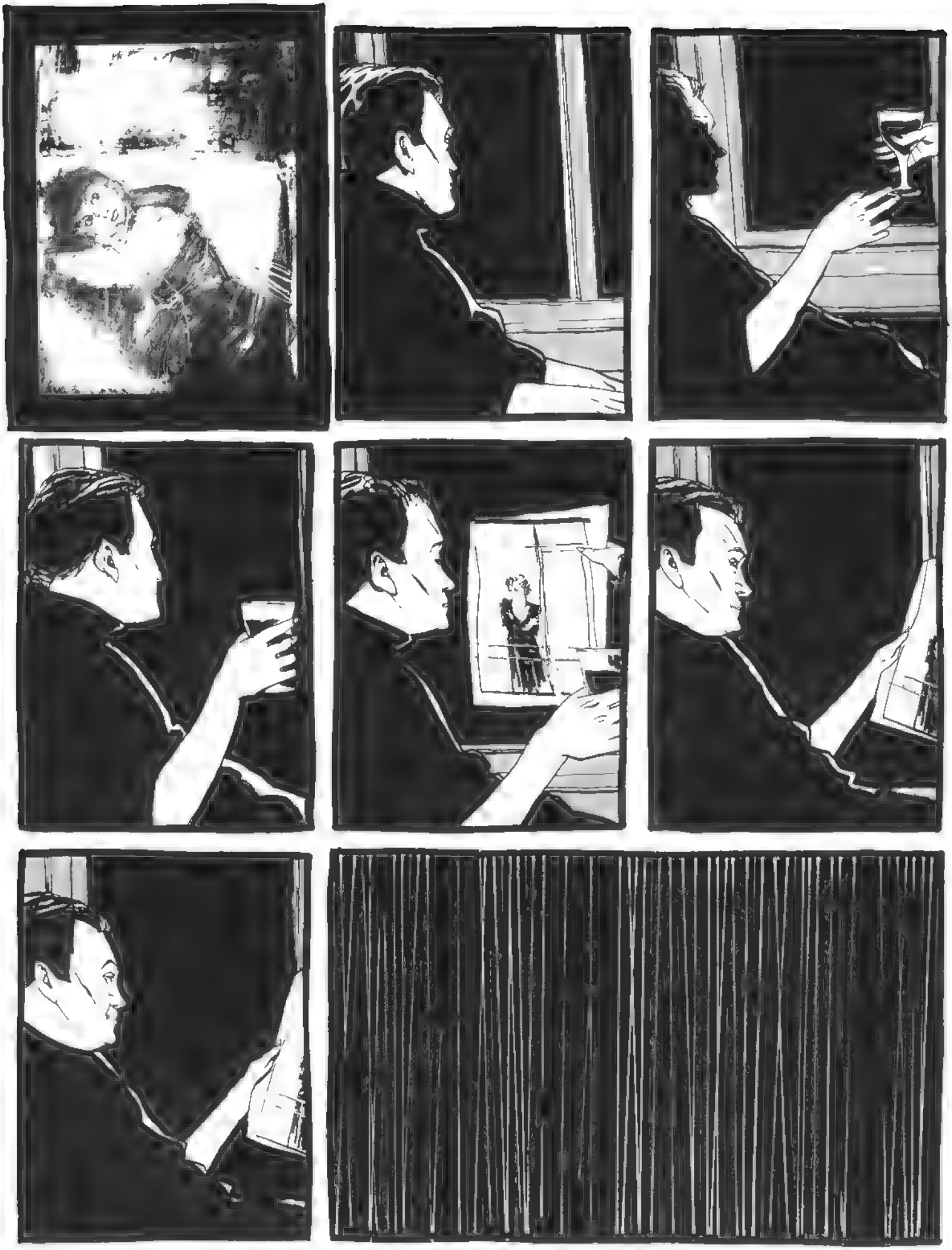
You're tense
I can feel all the muscles in your neck Tight
Heyyy
Don't cry
I know these are lonely times, but we have each other's strength
I miss being lonely
I miss being unseen I miss being alone so much
When this started, during the first few weeks I thought I was going to go crazy Not seeing anybody Not really going out. Certainly not together. I felt like a non-person.

But this constant feeling of being watched like a specimen I feel like a germ on a glass slide under a microscope
I miss being unnoticed more than anything else
I know I'm sorry
I don't mean to complain.
I miss trees
I haven't touched a tree in years Remember when we used to go to the cabin at the foothills
I would write and you would look after the fruit trees and the vegetable patch, and we would walk and make up stories
Why bring this up now?
They can't take away those memories
Of course they can

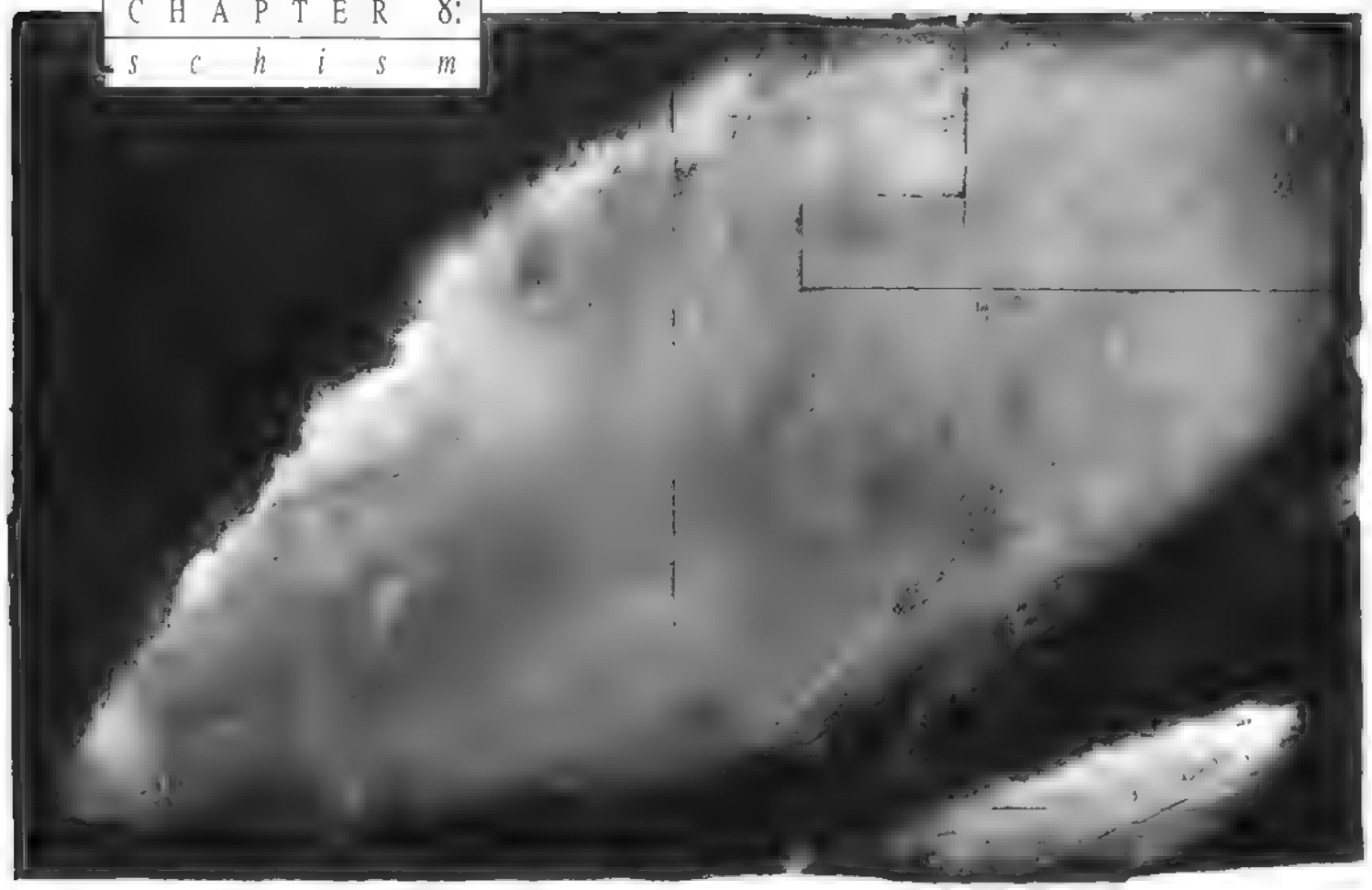
Maybe not as easily as a book, or a picture or a photograph
But every day, the details which give the memories substance, become more blurred
I miss the contact between us
Look at us, waltzing around the room
Tip-toeing around conversations Only small talk
Day to day inanities that's all that's allowed. Just in case we say what we really mean
What have we got to lose? This farce of a relationship? Is it really that precious?
Please
What? Is this too dangerous to talk about?

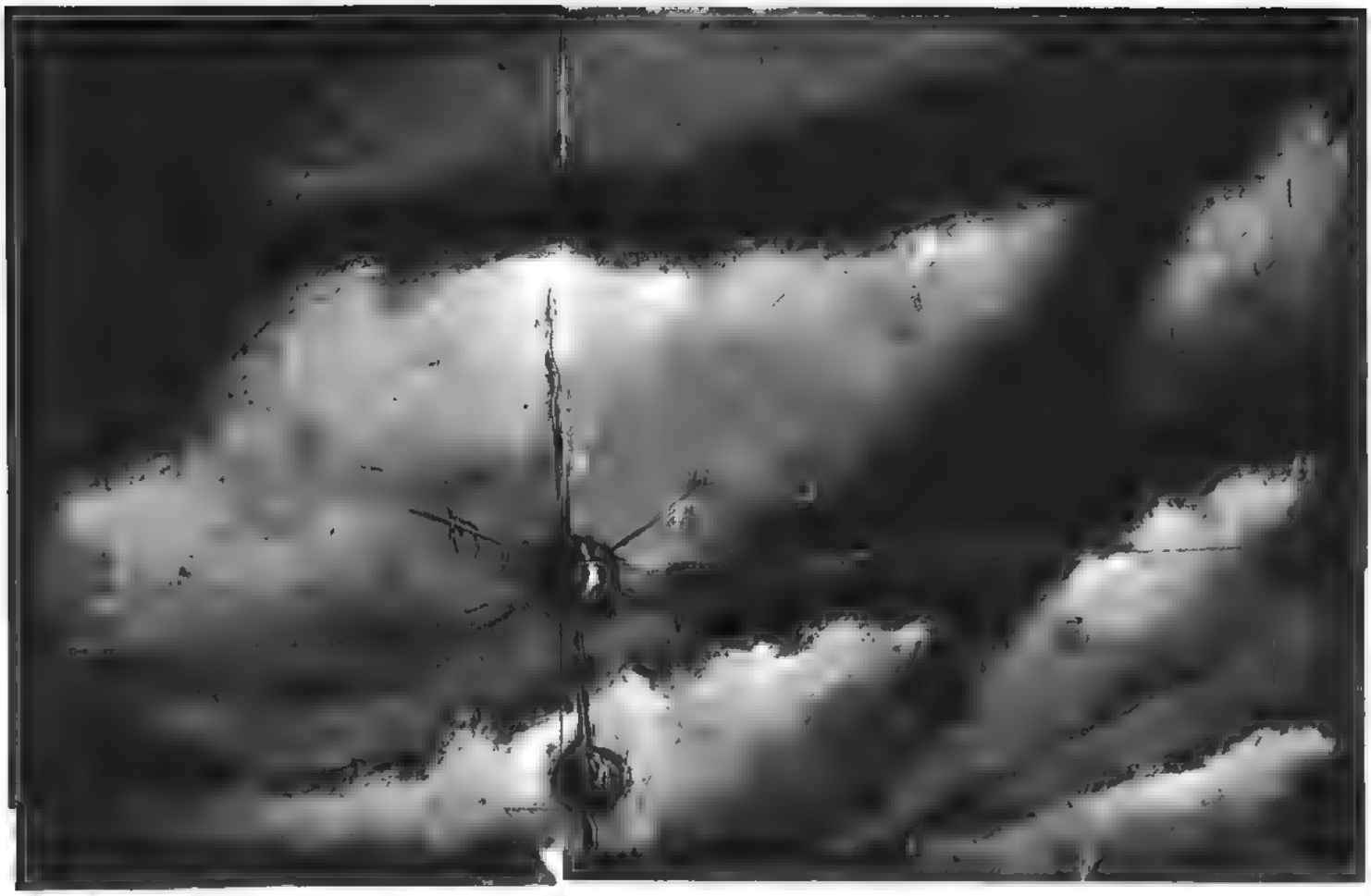
We can talk about what we miss. Sure, I miss this, you miss that. But we are here, now.
I thought I could deal with this. But we figured out what was happening and everything fell apart.
We stopped asking questions because we knew the answers would confirm our worst fears.
I don't want to have this conversation.
God DAMN you, we're going to have this conversation.
I don't need to know why those bastards are doing what they're doing. What happens, happens. I'll live with it.
I don't need to know anything you can't tell me.
They take everything. Everything you love.
They rip pages out of books, they, uh

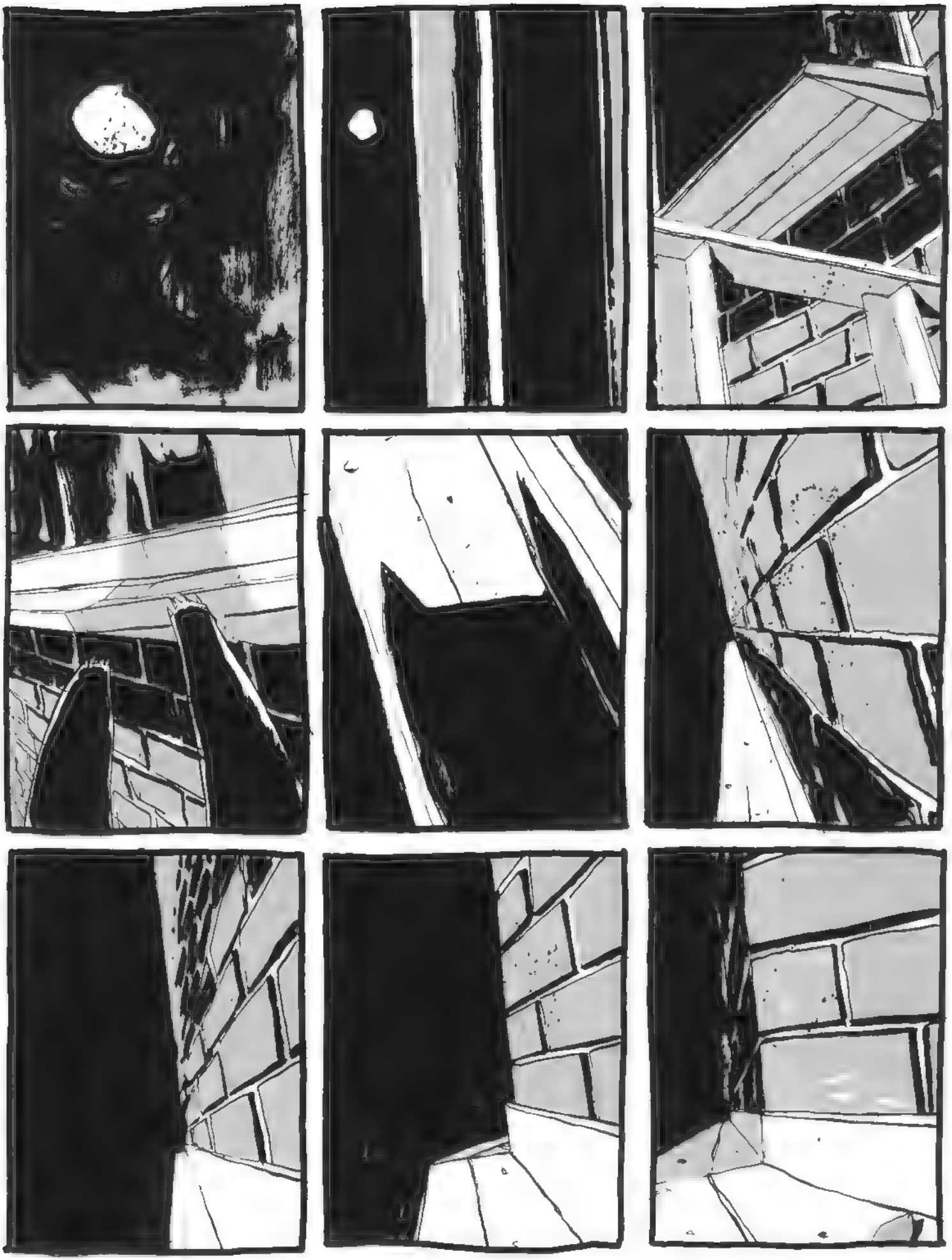
Please
NO! I'm going to finish this. They rip pages out of books, they take plants, music, anything.
Anything you love
No
WHY JONATHAN?
Why am I still here
Please
Why am I still here?



CHAPTER 8:
schism



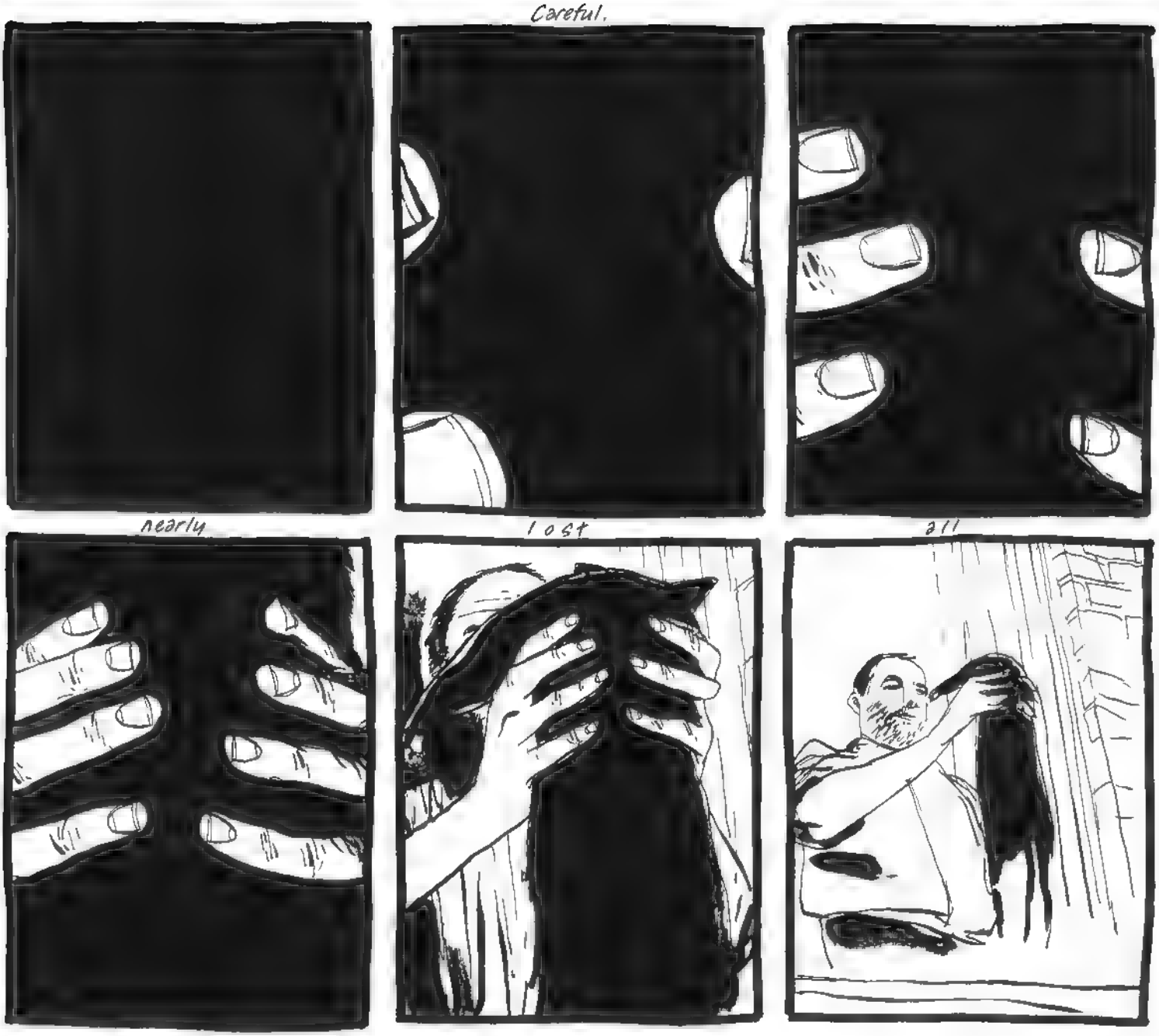




Jesus, cat, what are you walking on, thin air?
So how are you going to get down again, hmm?
Can't turn around
Can't fly.

You could jump and hope a pigeon breaks your fall
No?
Okay, you want to come in?
Okay

whayoOOps


Careful.
nearly
lost
all

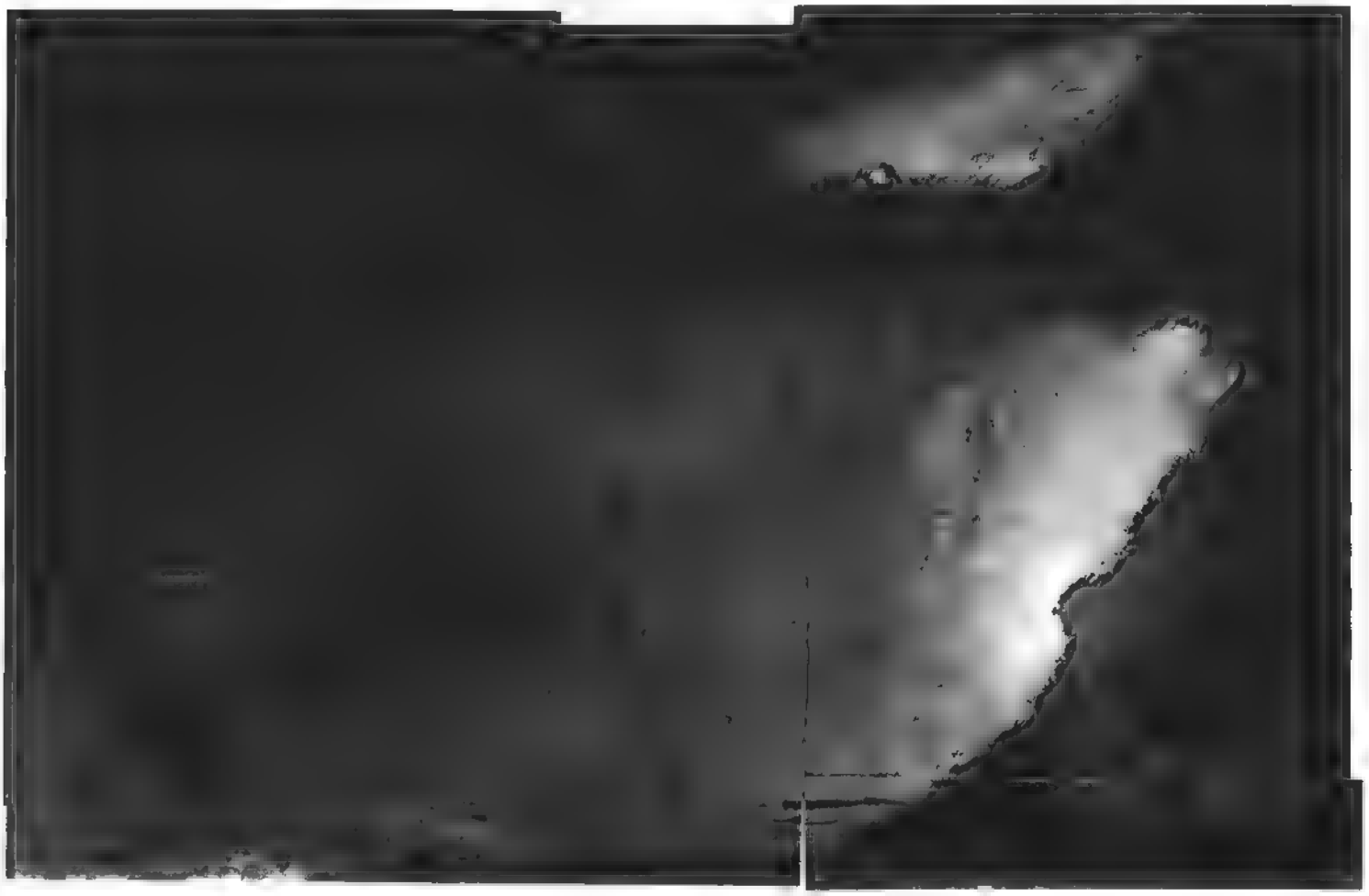
nine of
you
in
one
go.
then...

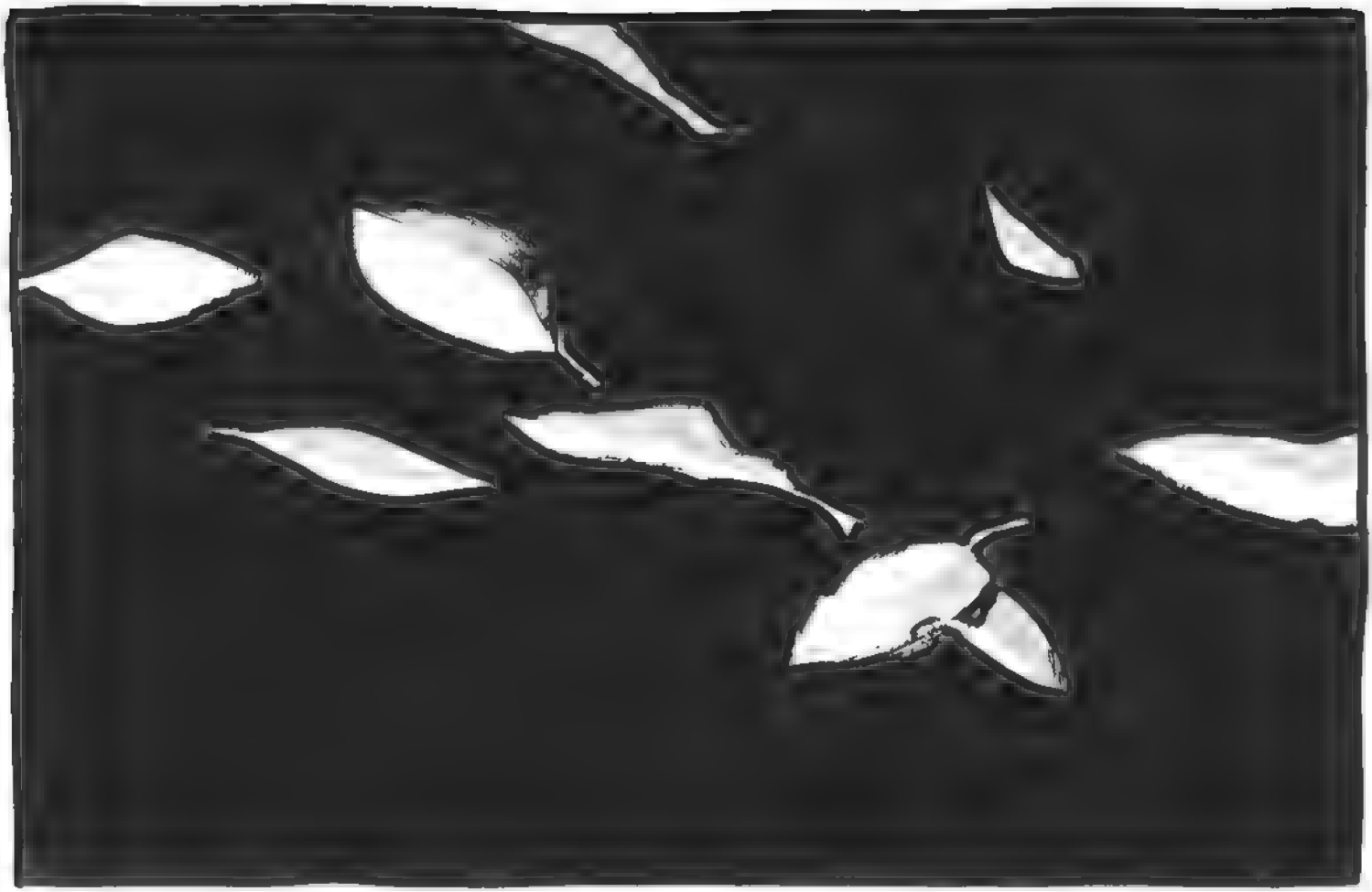
SHIT !
Shit, man..
What ?

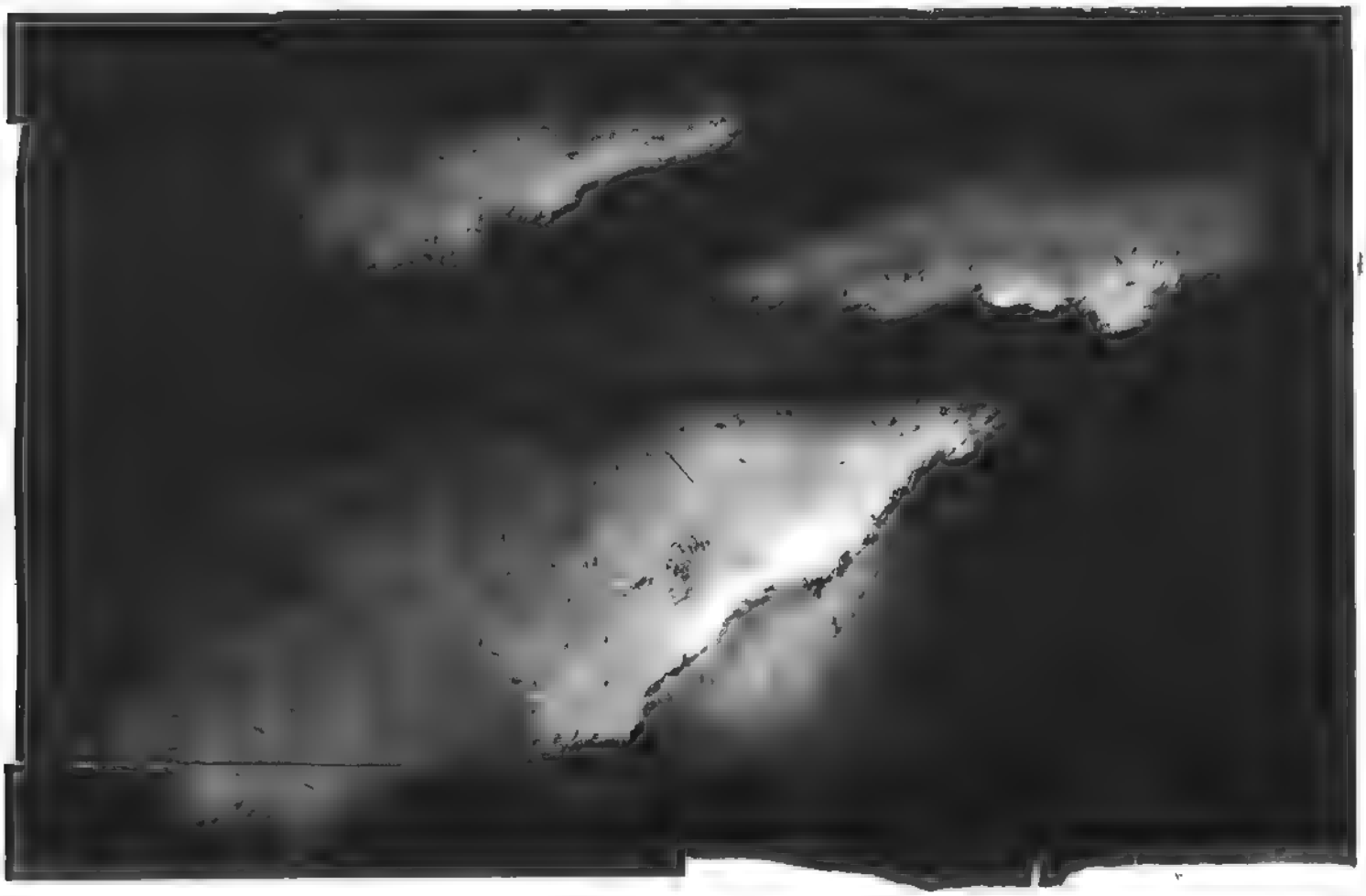
D'you see that?
What?
White folk fallin' outta the sky.
What?
Land behind them trash cans
Bare-ass naked

Man, you a sorry sonofabitch, suckin' on that shitty beer all day
Shut the fuck up man, I see what I see
Come on, man we late enough as it is
Hey, you alive?
Jus' wait a minute
Hup!
See, it's just one a' his bum friends
HEY, YOU OKAY?
Yes, oh yes thanks

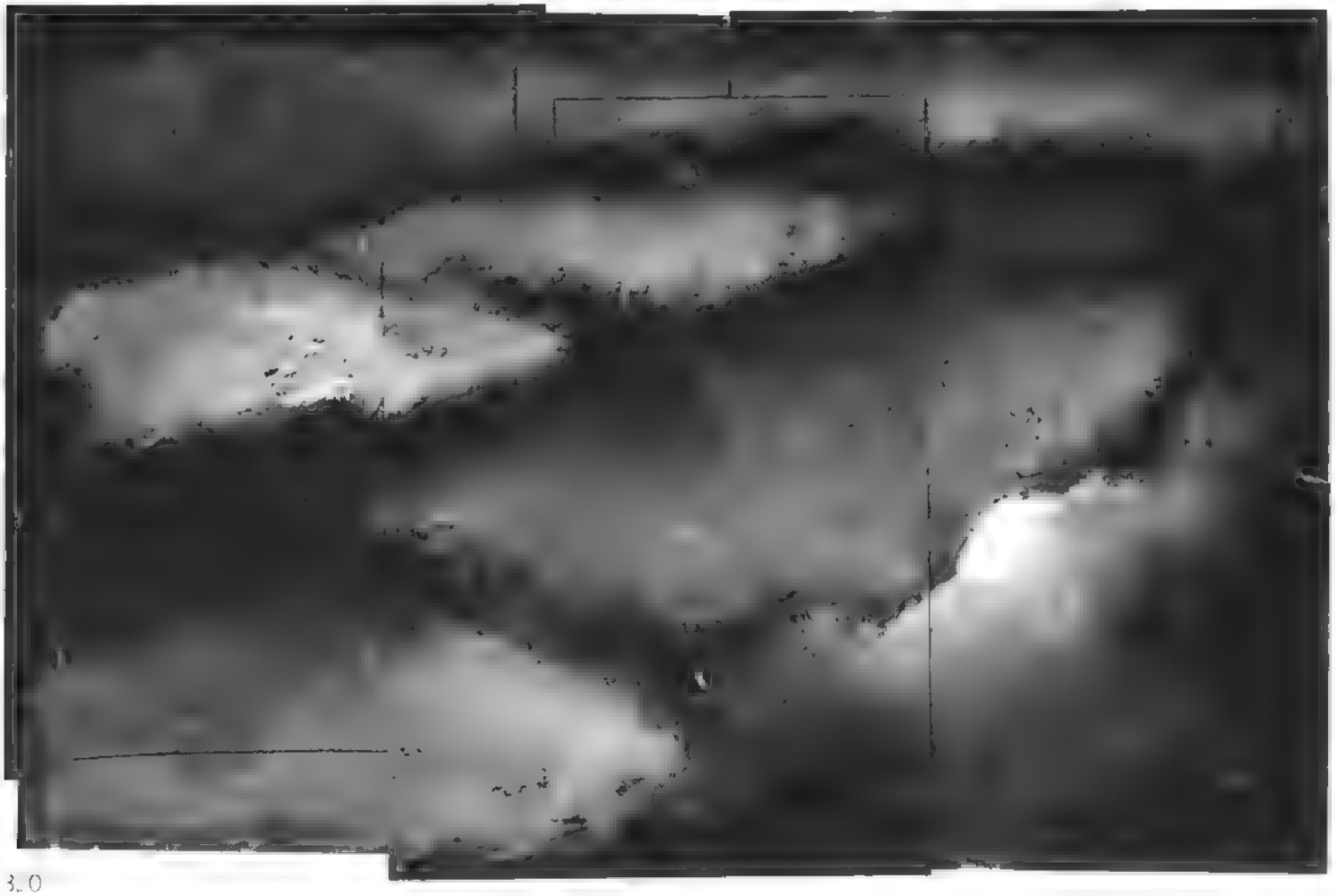
Ahm heavy night, yknow?
Hmm
See?
PUT SOME CLOTHES ON THAT MOTHER!
Uh huh
Shit bring down the whole fuckin' neighbourhood

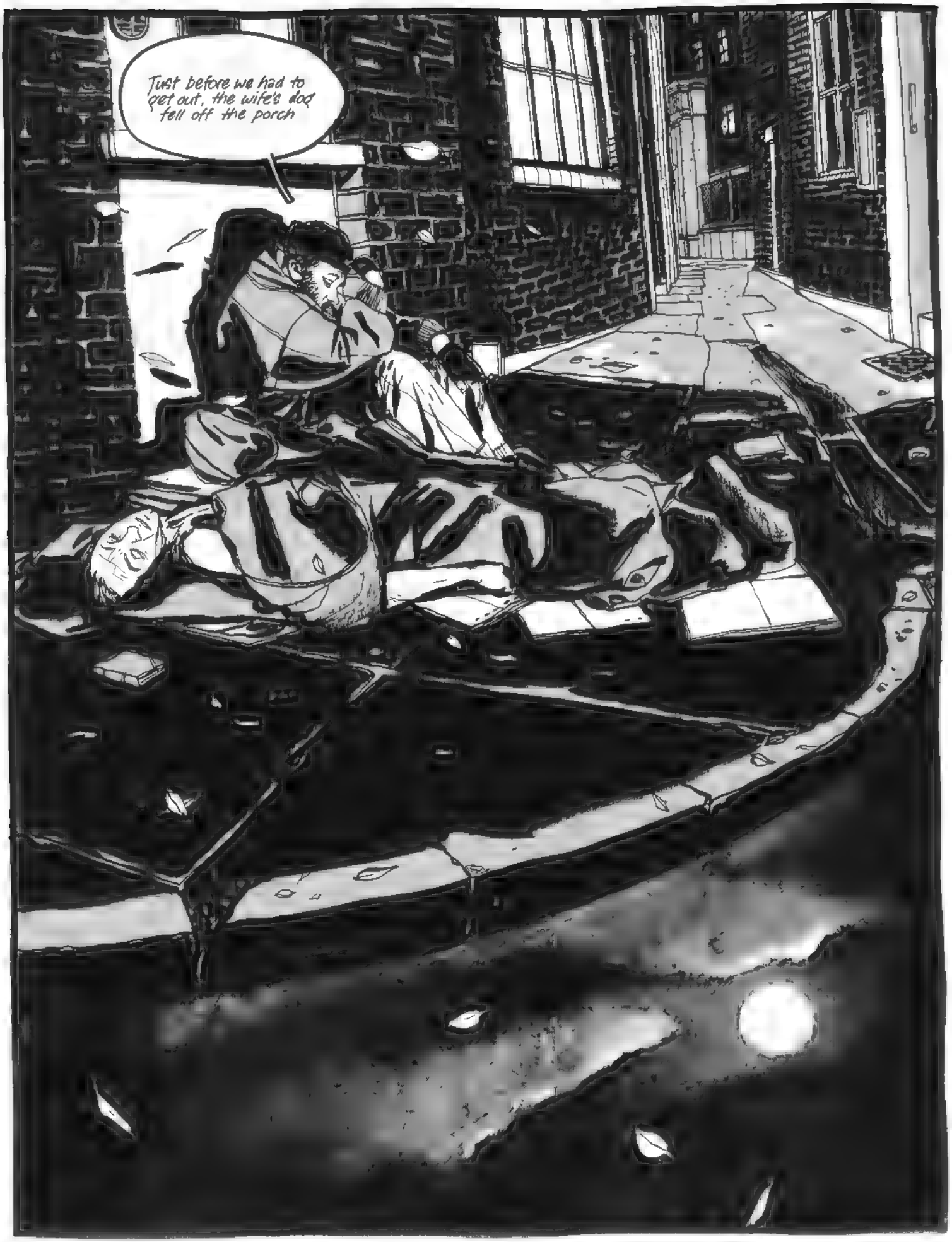






So because of that, then the payments fell so far behind, we had to sell up




Just before we had to get out, the wife's dog fell off the porch

Course she was destroyed

She started to keep fish.

That was the beginning of the end, really

Hmm?

Is that you?

Shit, man I'd just about given up on you

Hey, are you okay?
GO AWAY! THIS IS OUR HOME

WHAT DO YOU WANT?
Shhh .. d'you want to dream a little quieter you'll wake up the whole world

Jonathan? Who's Jonathan?

JONATHAN WHAT DO THEY WANT?
In where? what's... what, where?

WHAT?
I don't know! I wish I did!

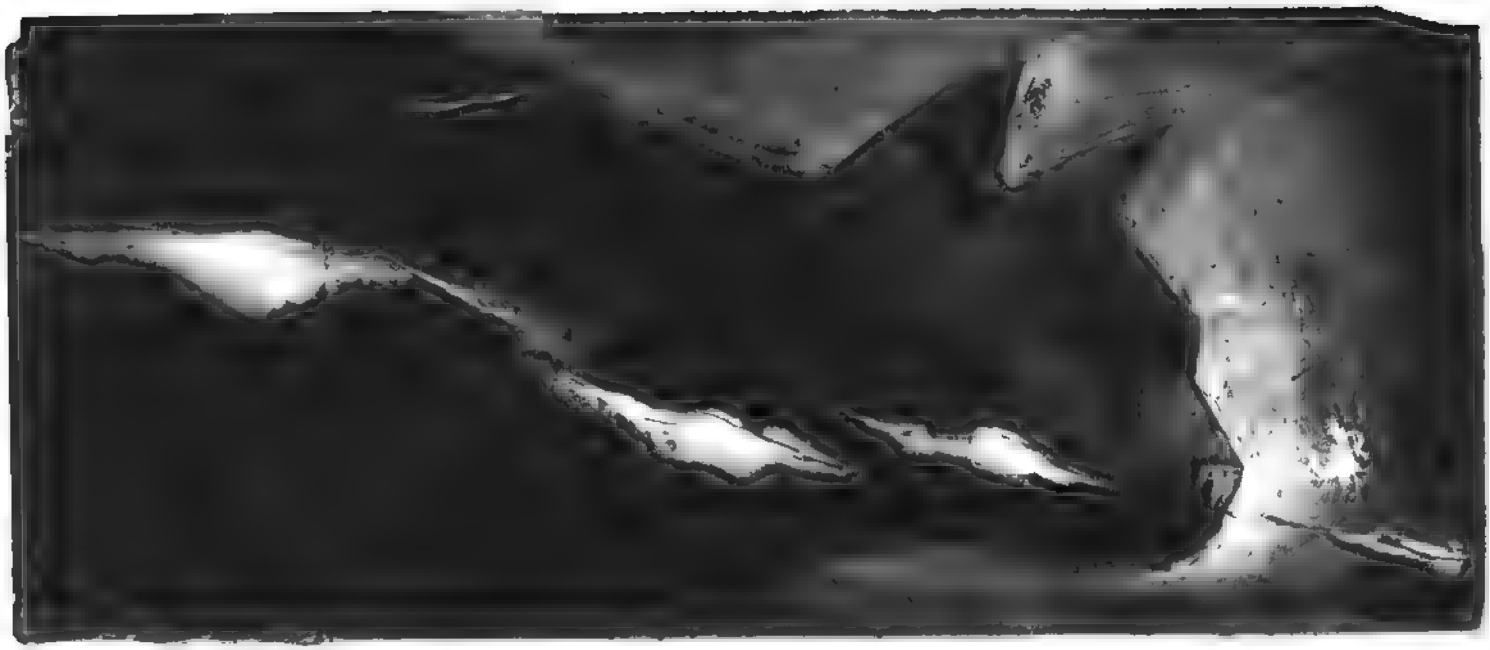
SHIT!

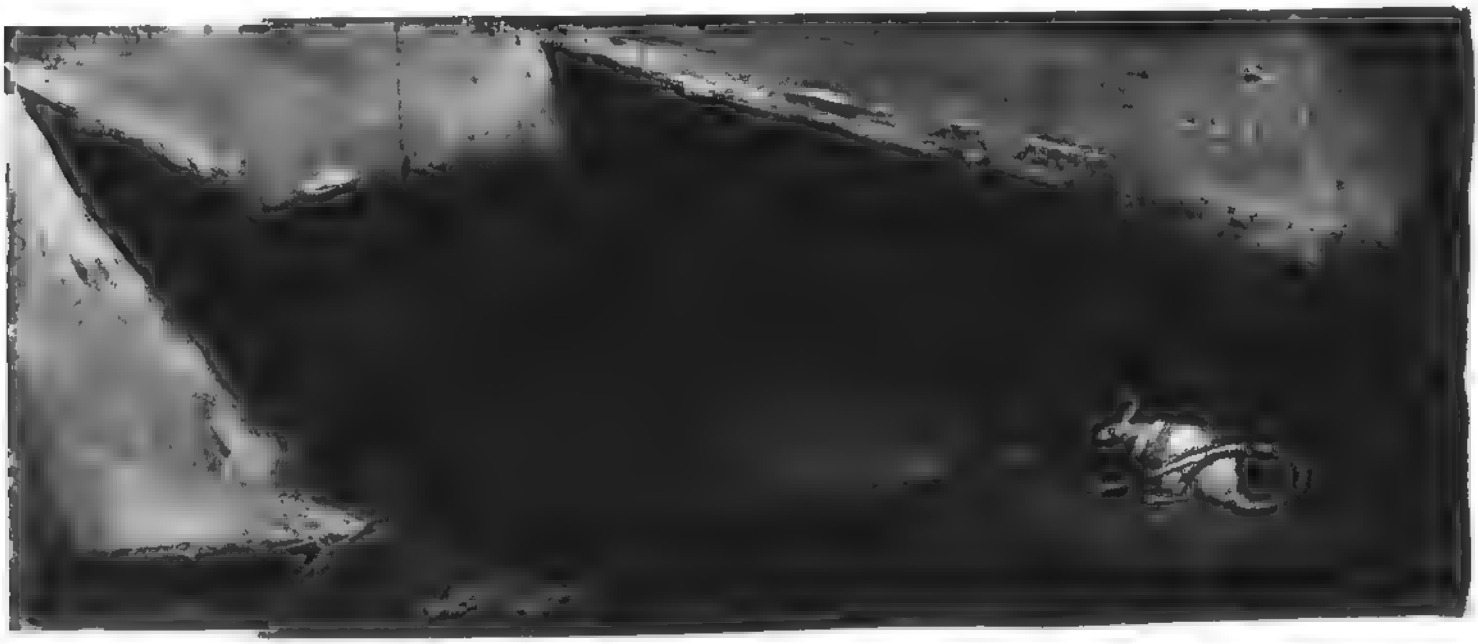
YOU CAN'T TAKE IT. IT DOESN'T BELONG TO ME!

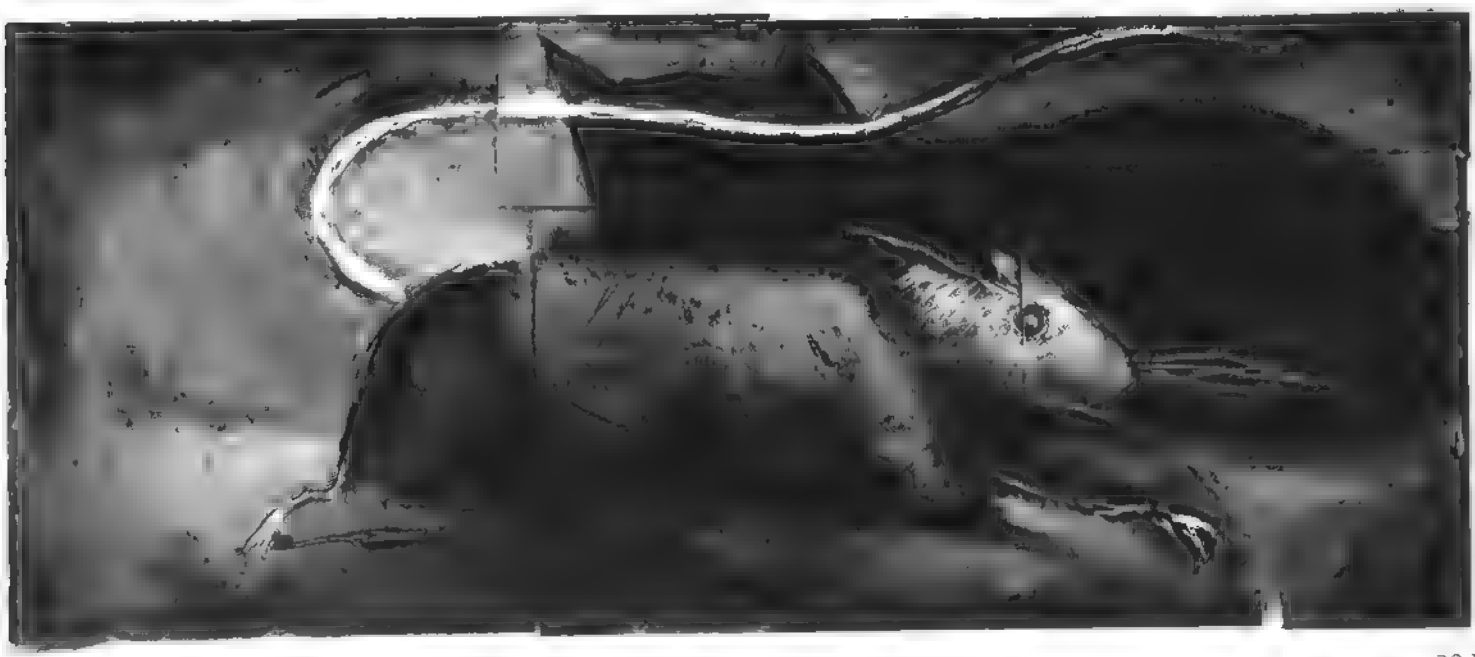
A CAT.
A cat?

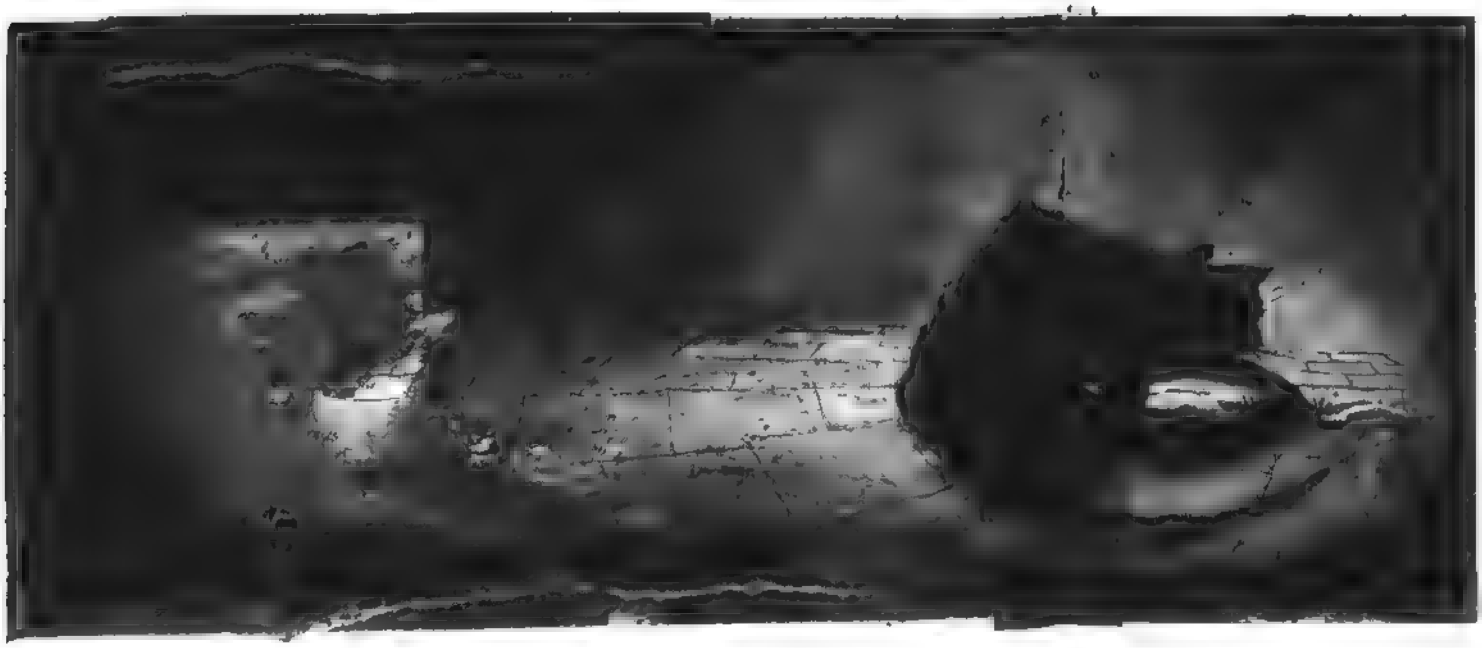
Well, I've lost the plot, completely.
WHERE ARE YOU TAKING IT
WHY?
Oh no, come on, pal Don't go off again.
You've been out for two days already

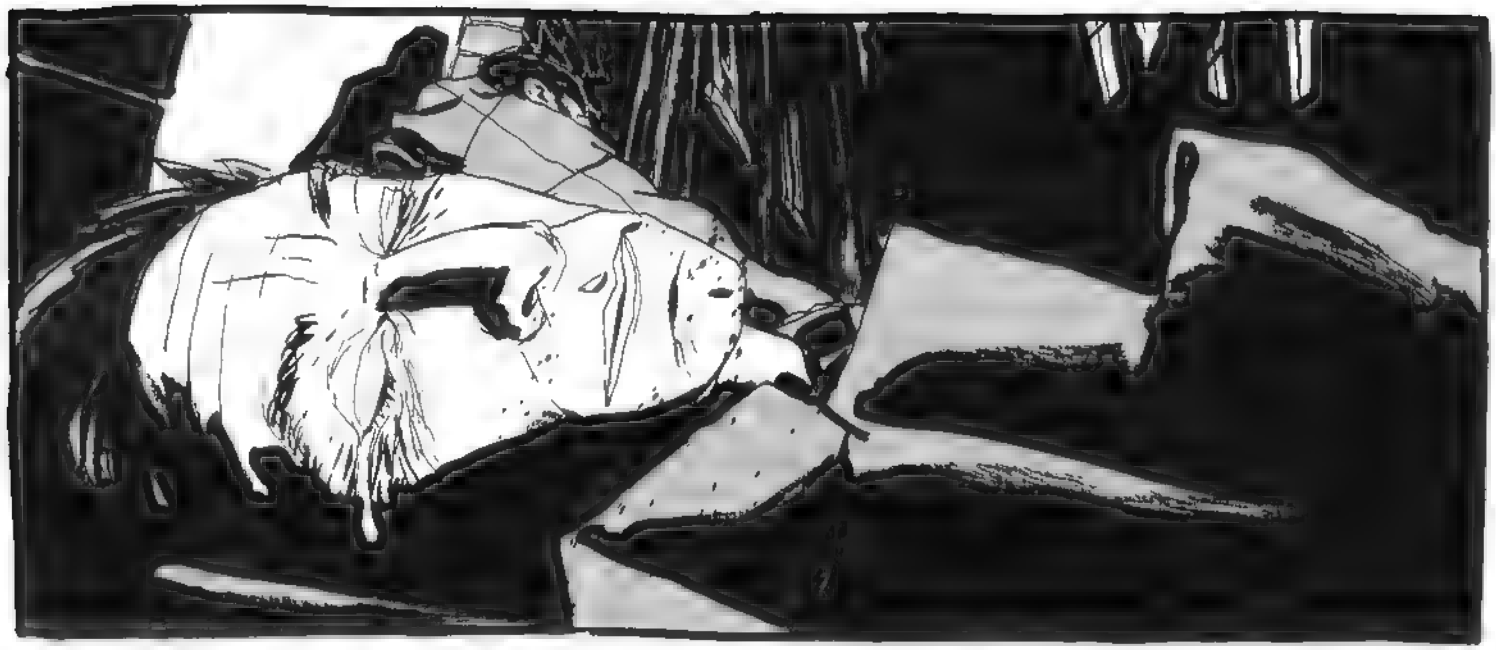
Shit.
What's going on in there?











Shhh!, keep it
mustn't be discouraged
try to relax

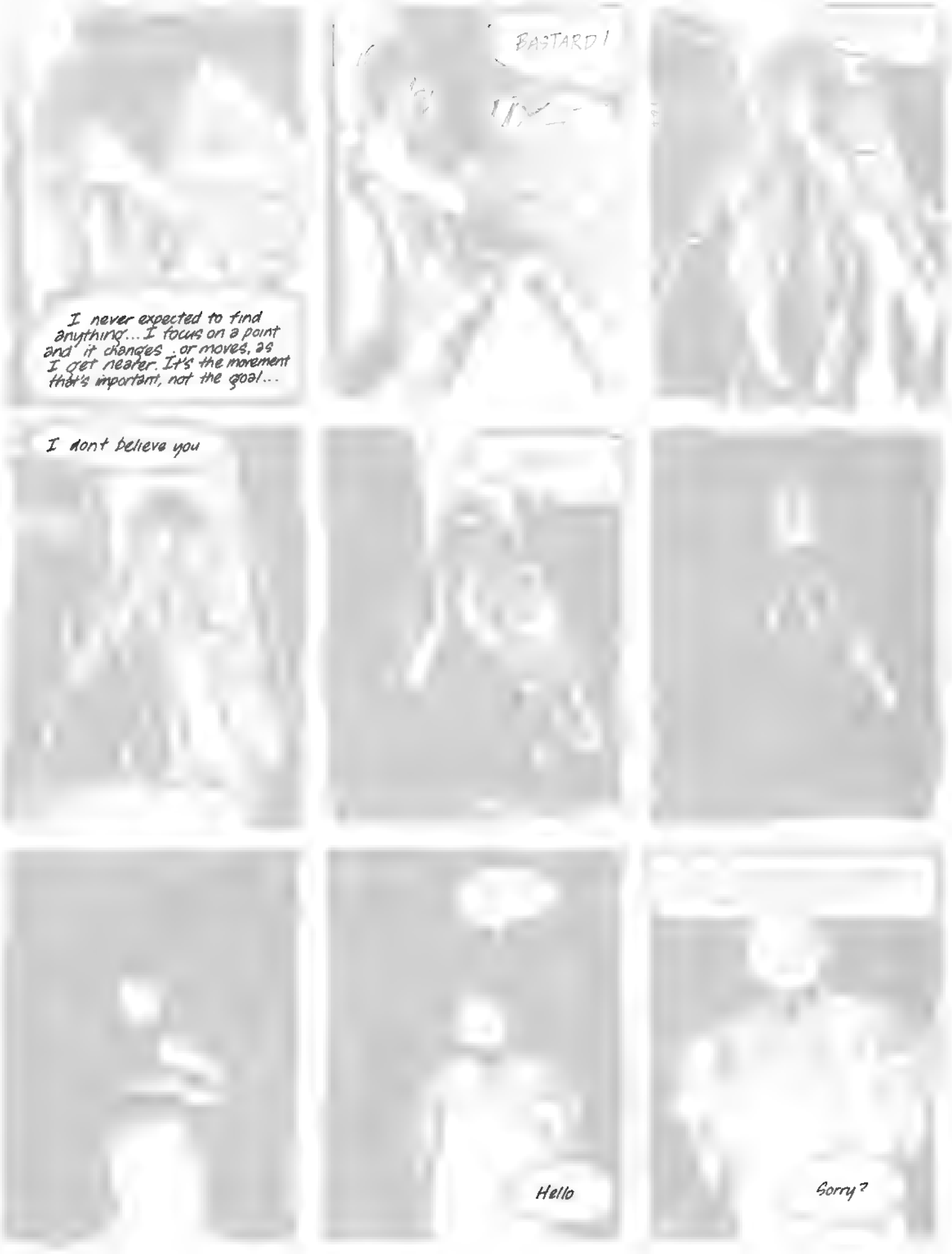
AHA
OH DEAR
IT'S RATHER
WET

CHRIST!
WAKE UP!
AAAAAAAAAA!
Wake up, for God's sake..
AAAAA
Uccck
Huh. ungh. they're ung they're killing me..
Whook?

I. I'm a cat. and.. unqh... they're killing me...
uh huuh..
Do you understand Ahnngh
Unngh I can see.. through his eyes. unqh I'm dying and unqh I'm seeing.
.death
GAHHHun
COUGHHH uHN.
I can see
a light

Hello?
Hello?
Who are you?
Where is this place?
I don't understand
Who?
Who's not here?

Who?
Can I help you look for him?
But why stop searching?
No
No, you're looking for the wrong things. You're asking the wrong questions.


I never expected to find anything... I focus on a point and it changes . or moves, as I get nearer. It's the movement that's important, not the goal...
BASTARD!
I dont believe you
Hello
Sorry?

I've arrived where?
I ache from the journey.
Can I sleep?
I like the paintings. are they mine?
No, thank you I'd just like to sleep
thank you

Heaven sounds
Uhhh thank God
This is a shock to me
It wasn't a dream
No, I mean this. All this I'm actually dead I can't quite believe it, yet I know it's true
I suppose
I suppose I can't argue with that.
This is a curious picture

Yes, but the figure behind the tree seems out of place
Hmm?
Oh well.. I suppose but why do you think he's there?
Yes, but why did he paint him there?
No, wait a minute! I want to know why this figure is here. What's the artist trying to say?
Does anybody here have any thoughts on this?
At last
Or you!
Anybody? You! Just give me an interpretation.. anything?

What?
That's it?
That's ridiculous
I wish it were that simple but without examination, without interpretation, it's all just meaningless sensation. I don't belong here
I'll have to leave

Here is a small painting of a bird by Tellener. Long thought to be a representation of the fire bird as prophesied three hundred years ago by Jeremiah it is in fact a sparrow

Tellener died of Syphilis, moaning but confused

He ever was a notorious womanizer and in one of these unfortunate females smeared one of his canvases with paint after she realized he wasn't going to leave his wife as he'd promised

Here we have a landscape, thought to be by Sara, actually another Tellener, this one un-daubed by enraged women, remained unbought

Tellener put them to one side, until an enthusiastic collector pulled them out and pronounced them to be the finest apocalyptic visions ever committed to canvas

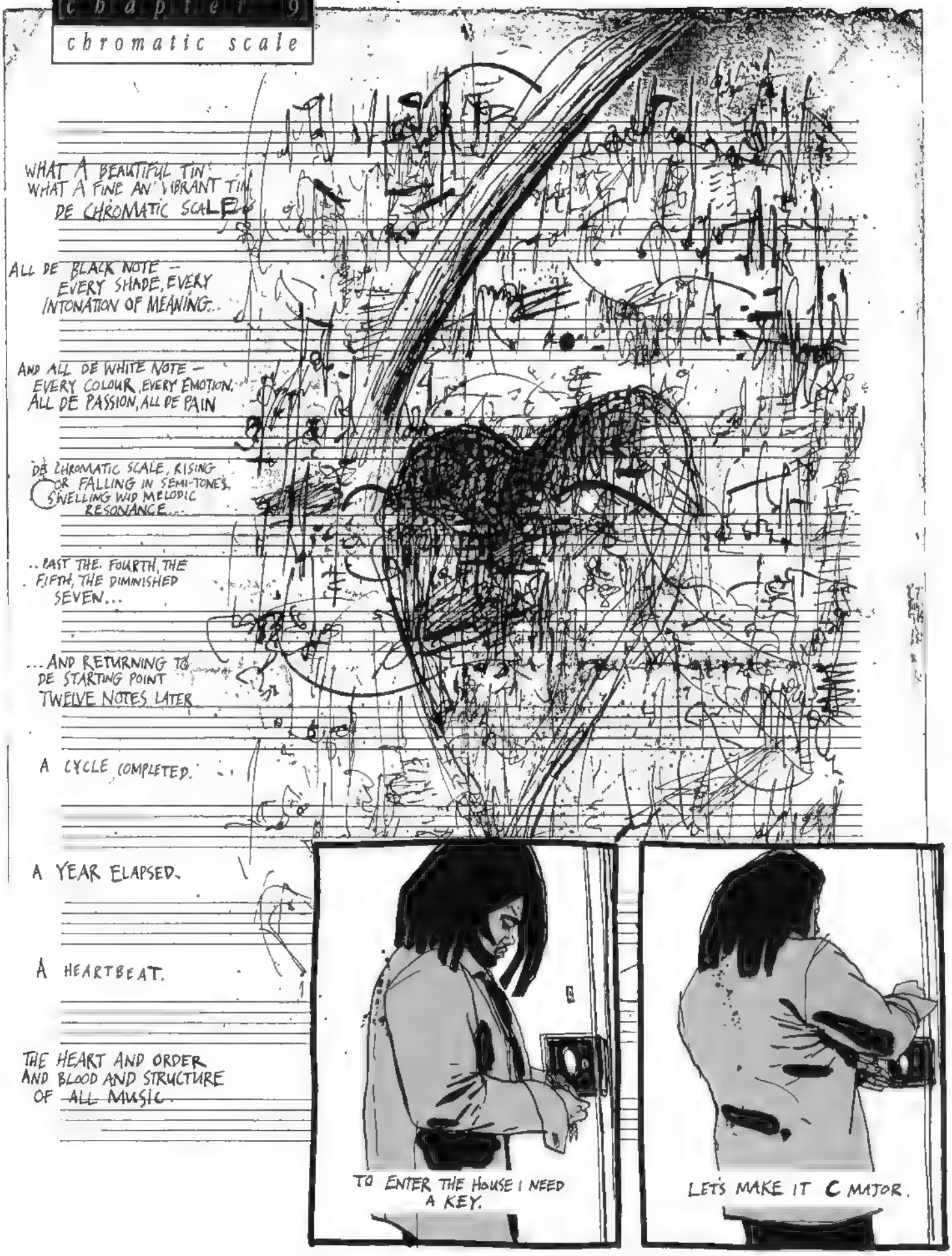
It is rather poorly painted in muddy greens and features a tree, which wasn't actually in the landscape Tellener was painting from

I don't believe you...
I'm not interested in a Heaven that's so damn certain of itself.

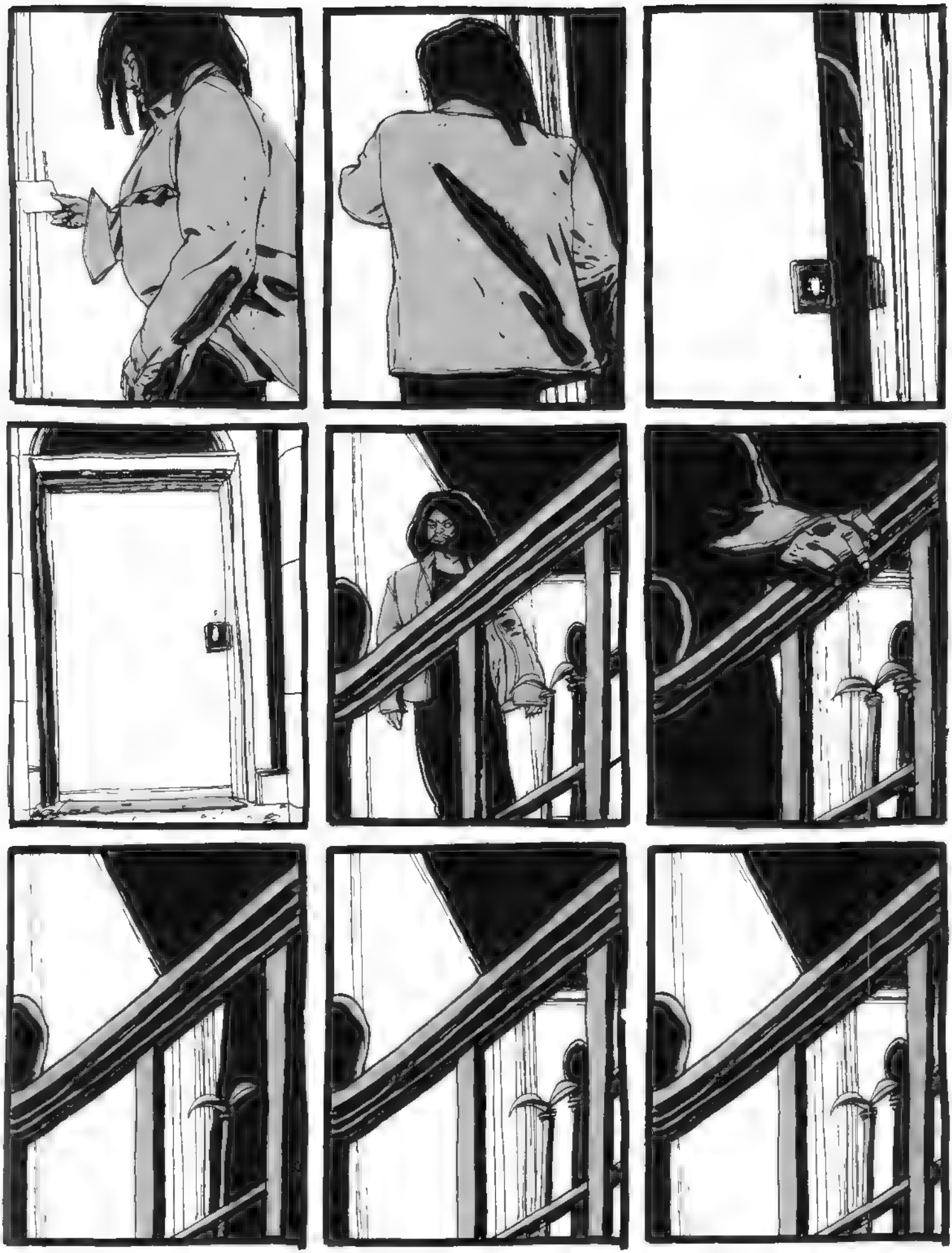
WHERE
ARE
YOU?

chapter 9

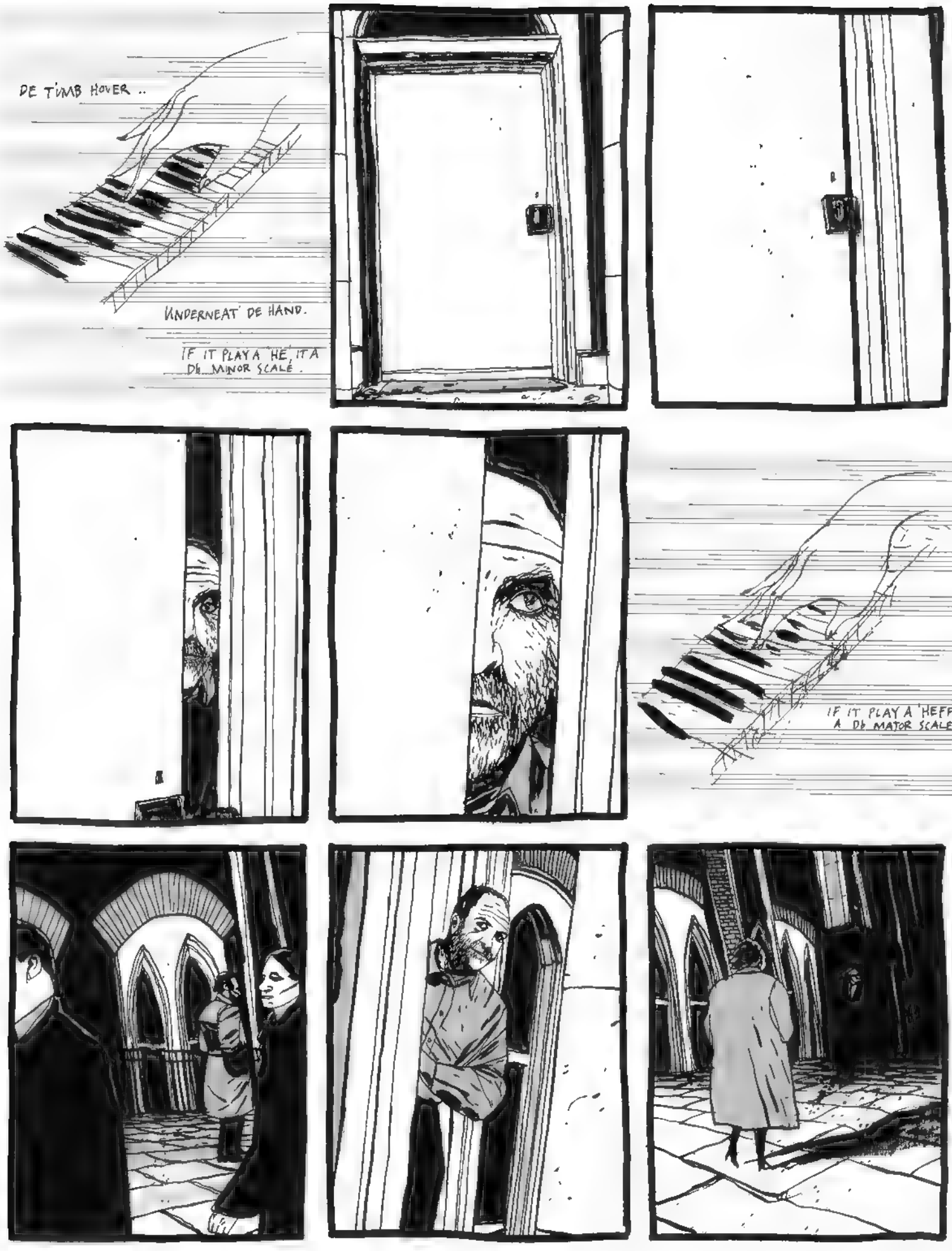
chromatic scale



THE WHITE C MAJOR SCALE SPLITS INTO SEVEN NOTES, SEVEN COLOURS OF DE SPECTRUM, RETURNING TO ITS ORIGINS ON DE EIGHTH.
A CHILD'S SCALE. PECKED OUT ON A TOY PIANO WID EAGER LICKLE FINGER..
C IS FOR CAT
AND COLOUR
AND CARD
AND ...um...
RATATOUILLE
COOK.



Db MAJOR...
OR MINOR..
DEY BOTH
NERVOUS
DEY BOTH..
START WID DE SECON' FINGER (Db)
THEN DE THIRD (Eb)..


DE T'UMB HOVER ..
UNDERNEAT' DE HAND.
IF IT PLAY A 'HE', IT A D♭ MINOR SCALE.
IF IT PLAY A 'HEFF', IT
A D♭ MAJOR SCALE...

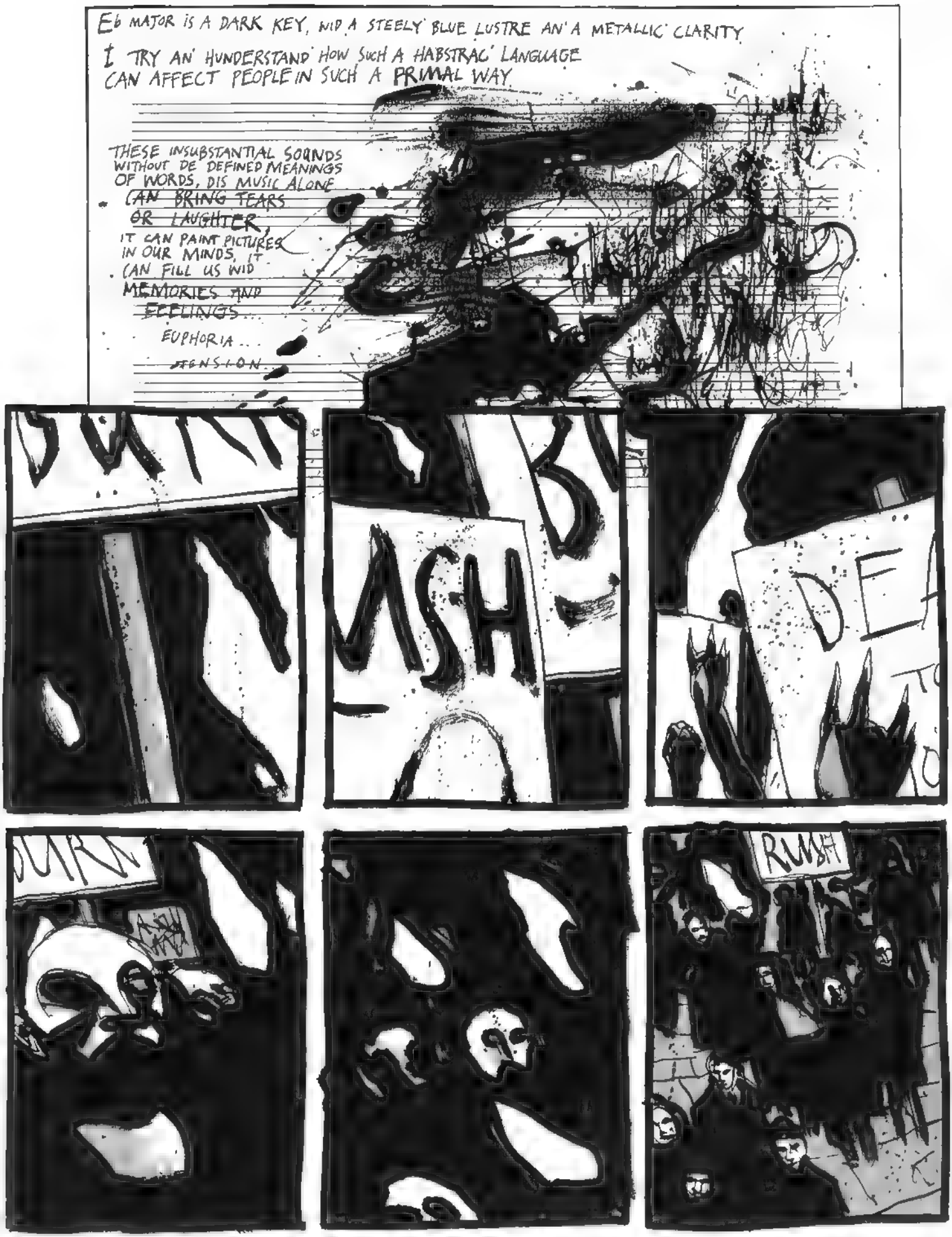
WHICH ONE?..

COMMIT...

THE 'D' SCALES ARE CONVERSATIONAL SCALES.
WHEN I LISTEN TO SOMEONE I LISTEN TO DE TONAL MODULATION OF DE SPEECH.
I LISTEN TO DE SHADES AND PAUSES AN' PHRASINGS.
I LISTEN AN' LEARN WHAT THAT PERSON IS T'INKIN' T'ROUGH DE STRUCTURE OF WHAT DEY SAY.
NOT DE FABRICATED MEANIN' OF DE WORDS DEY USE.
DE MESSAGE IS IN DE MUSIC.
Angel's a good lad
He's a good lad, but you see, he doesn't listen

You understand what Im sayin'? He's not a listener
He's got a swelled head if you want the truth, but he's a good kid.
His stuff goes right over people's heads, though
Oh yeah, right over.
All that.. stories an' poems an' shit
BORING.
Have you seen that audience?
Have you?
Yeah, okay, so they clap, but they're idiots

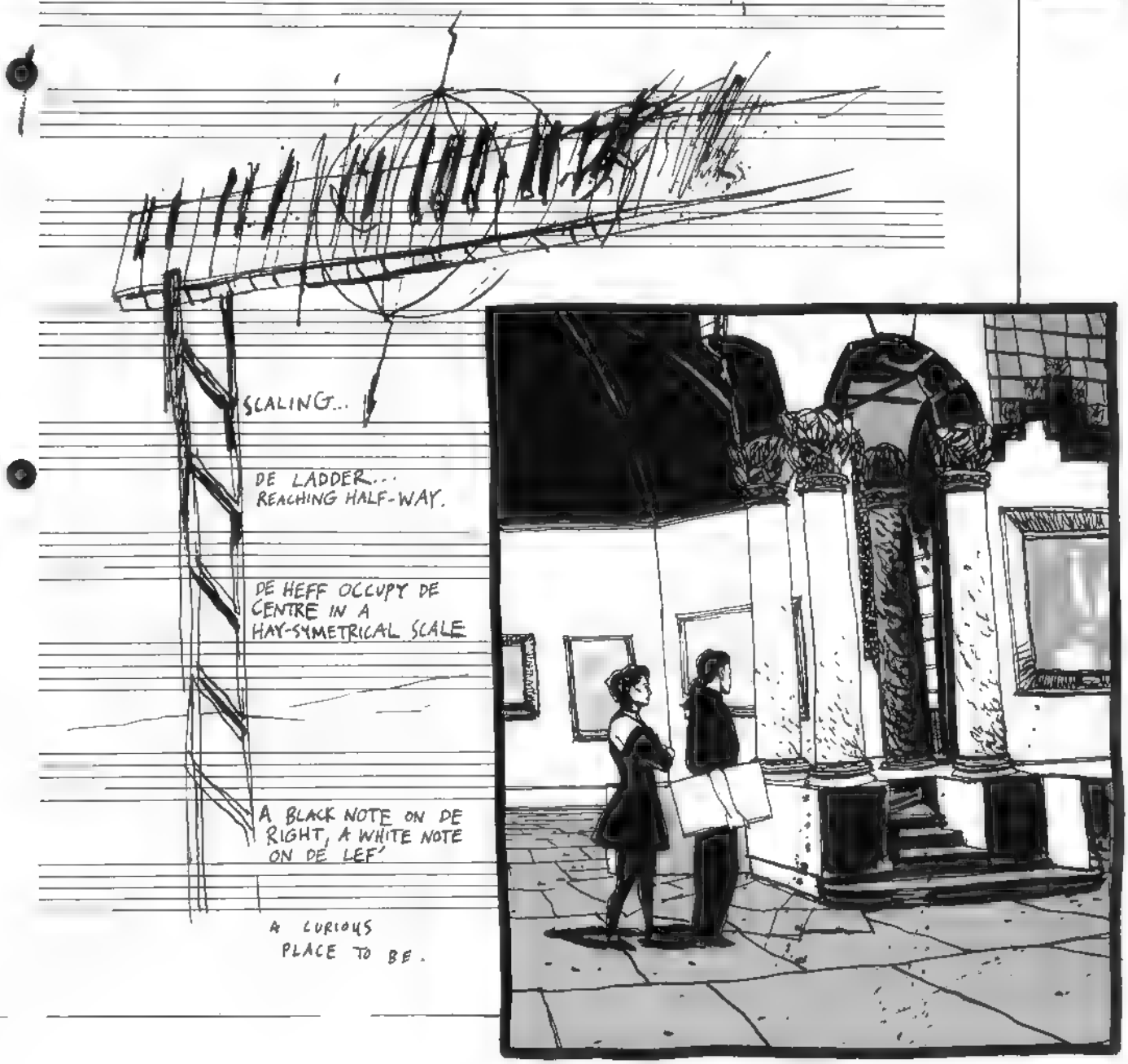
Anyway most of them are smoking God-knows-what. so that doesn't count.
And the rest are, you know, pseudo-posey-bloody-intellectual-bastards
I told him People want a good tune
Something to tap their feet to, yeah? Something to whistle on the way home
Excuse me
But you can't tell him anything
Arrogant bugger really
Excuse me
"My heart wants to fly"... there's a great tune
MY HEART WANTS TO FLY..
Excuse me
DA DEE DEE DEDUM..


E♭ MAJOR IS A DARK KEY, WID A STEELY BLUE LUSTRE AN' A METALLIC CLARITY . . .
I TRY AN' HUNDERSTAND HOW SUCH A HABSTRAC' LANGUAGE CAN AFFECT PEOPLE IN SUCH A PRIMAL WAY.
THESE INSUBSTANTIAL SOUNDS WITHOUT DE DEFINED MEANINGS OF WORDS, DIS MUSIC ALONE CAN BRING TEARS OR LAUGHTER,
IT CAN PAINT PICTURES IN OUR MINDS, IT CAN FILL US WID MEMORIES AND FEELINGS . . .
EUPHORIA . . .
TENSION . . .
RUSH
RUSH

E MINOR, THE COLOUR OF SAPHIRE. THE BLUE-STONE LIGHT THAT CARESS YOU IN DE DARK.
WHEN YOU STEP ONTO DE STAGE. WHEN YOU RAISE DE HORN AN WET DE LIP.
WHEN DE FOREHEAD BEAD AND DE FINGER TWITCH
AN' DE EYE CLOSE..
E MINOR IS DE COLOUR OF DE BLUES.
One time.
One time. I'm tryin' to remember the whole story...
Damn... anyway, someone close to Angel had died. I think it must have been his mother, or..
..that's right, I don't think we ever knew, he never said, but you know, word gets around...
.. I don't think anybody really knew what had happened, but the guy was ashen
He turned up, we didn't expect to see him, yeah? He turned up near the end of the set.
Man he walked quietly up to the stage, and you know, he's such a gentleman He's the most gentle man I've ever known, but he looked like stone

He looked like ebony... that's the only way I can describe it... he looked like ebony, and all the eyes in the room followed him to the mic
You know like they say about them black stars .. yeah? Black stars...
Angel was like that... all the light in the room fell into him...
He raised his horn and started to play... this... tortured piece...
It had an agonizing, harrowing beauty I can't describe it. The tone was sublime but it cut into you...
..He played for about twenty minutes I think.. Christ, it could have been twenty years.. this tormented ballad.... man...
The audience were cryin' an' shit... this room full of people, every single person for those twenty minutes felt utterly and profoundly alone
I'll never forget that night
I never found out what had happened. I never asked.

Heh.
I want to tell my Angel story
He wants to tell his Angel story.


SCALING...
DE LADDER... REACHING HALF-WAY.
DE HEFF OCCUPY DE CENTRE IN A HAY-SYMETRICAL SCALE
A BLACK NOTE ON DE RIGHT, A WHITE NOTE ON DE LEF'
A CURIOUS PLACE TO BE.

Oh no, look at this.

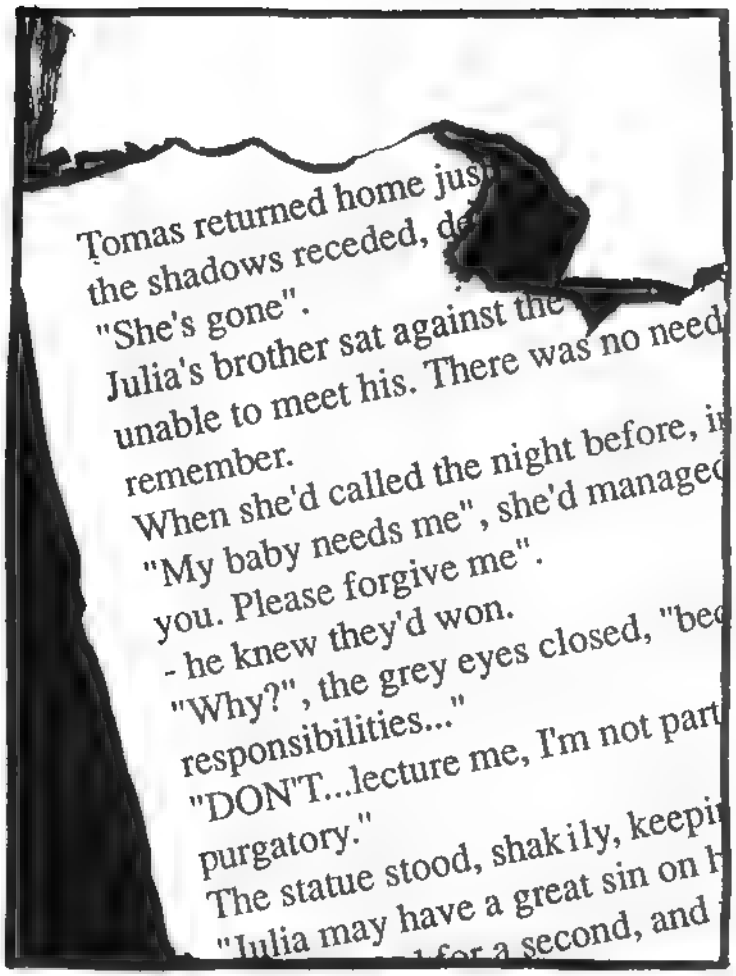
Uh huh.

Does it ring your bell?
It's... erm.
It's a bit..
...dark
I think there's one of these black canvases in every museum in the world.
They must come with the building. "Here's the lease, here's the key, and here's the large matt-black painting with the tree, incomprehensible title.
"A small soul, falling into deep water."

Maybe they breed them up on the.
the...
... what the hell is going on out there?

WHEN DE CELLO SLOWLY LIFT ITS HEAD OUT OF DE SILENCE...
DARK, FORBODING...
BASS, TUBA, BARITONE VOICES RUMBLING OUT OF DE VERY EARTH.
F# MAJOR, USING ALL DE BLACK NOTES, MY GOD, WHEN ORCHESTRATED YOU WOULD SWEAR THE GATES OF HELL HAD OPENED AND DISGORGED THE MOST DISPAIRING ADAGISIMO.
F# IS THE TONALITY OF BLACK INK.
IT IS THE SOUND OF VERMILLION PAINT.
BURN
RUST TO HELL

CAGES
CAGES
JONATHAN RUSH
CAGES


Tomas returned home jus
the shadows receded, de
"She's gone".
Julia's brother sat against the
unable to meet his. There was no need
remember.
When she'd called the night before, i
"My baby needs me", she'd managed
you. Please forgive me".
- he knew they'd won.
"Why?", the grey eyes closed, "bec
responsibilities..."
"DON'T...lecture me, I'm not part
purgatory."
The statue stood, shakily, keepi
"Julia may have a great sin on h
for a second, and

Tomas returned home just ahead of the sun.

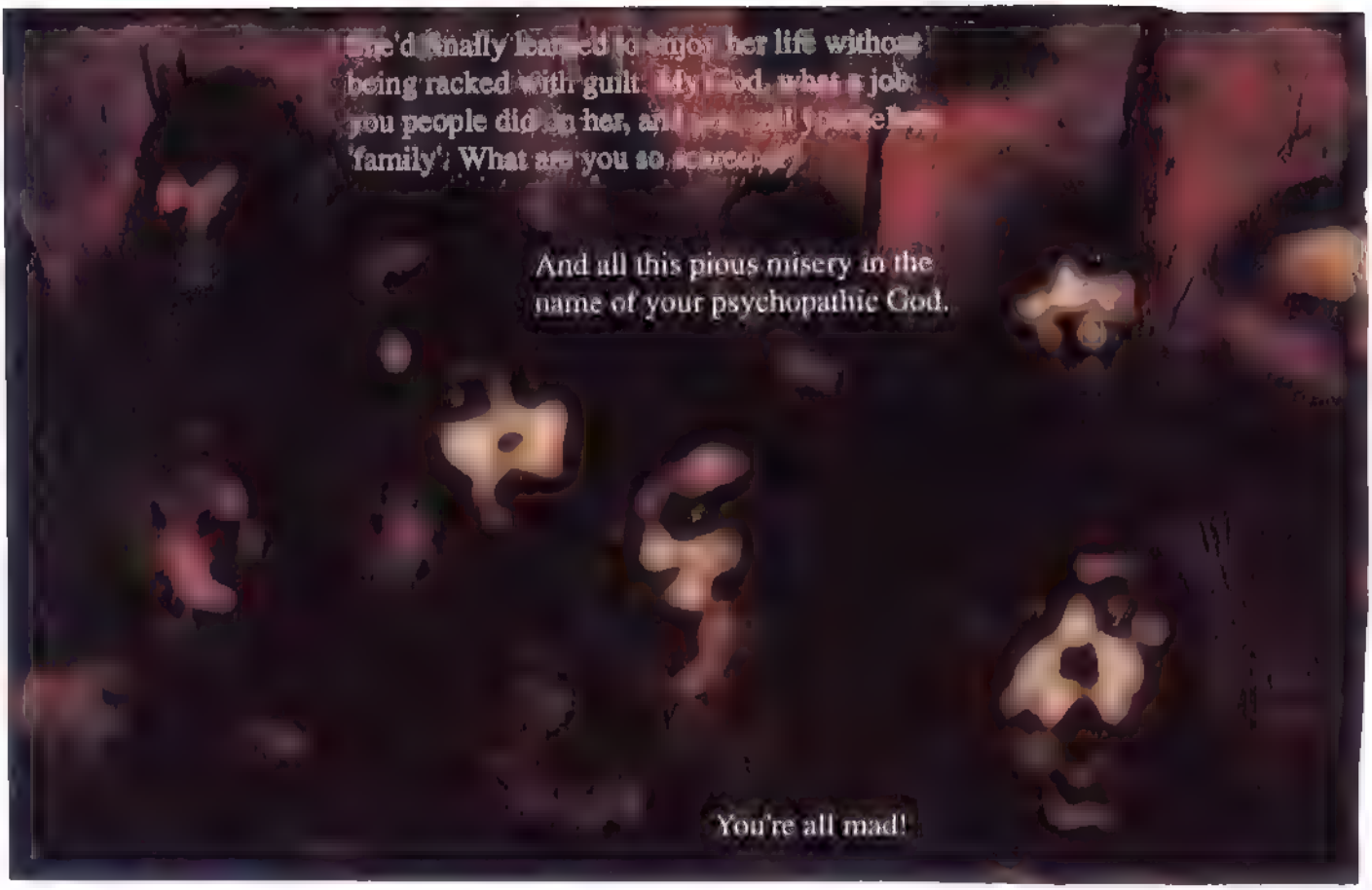
A peach light stained through the lace curtains, the shadows receded, deadening what little furniture and dust-collectors they possessed.

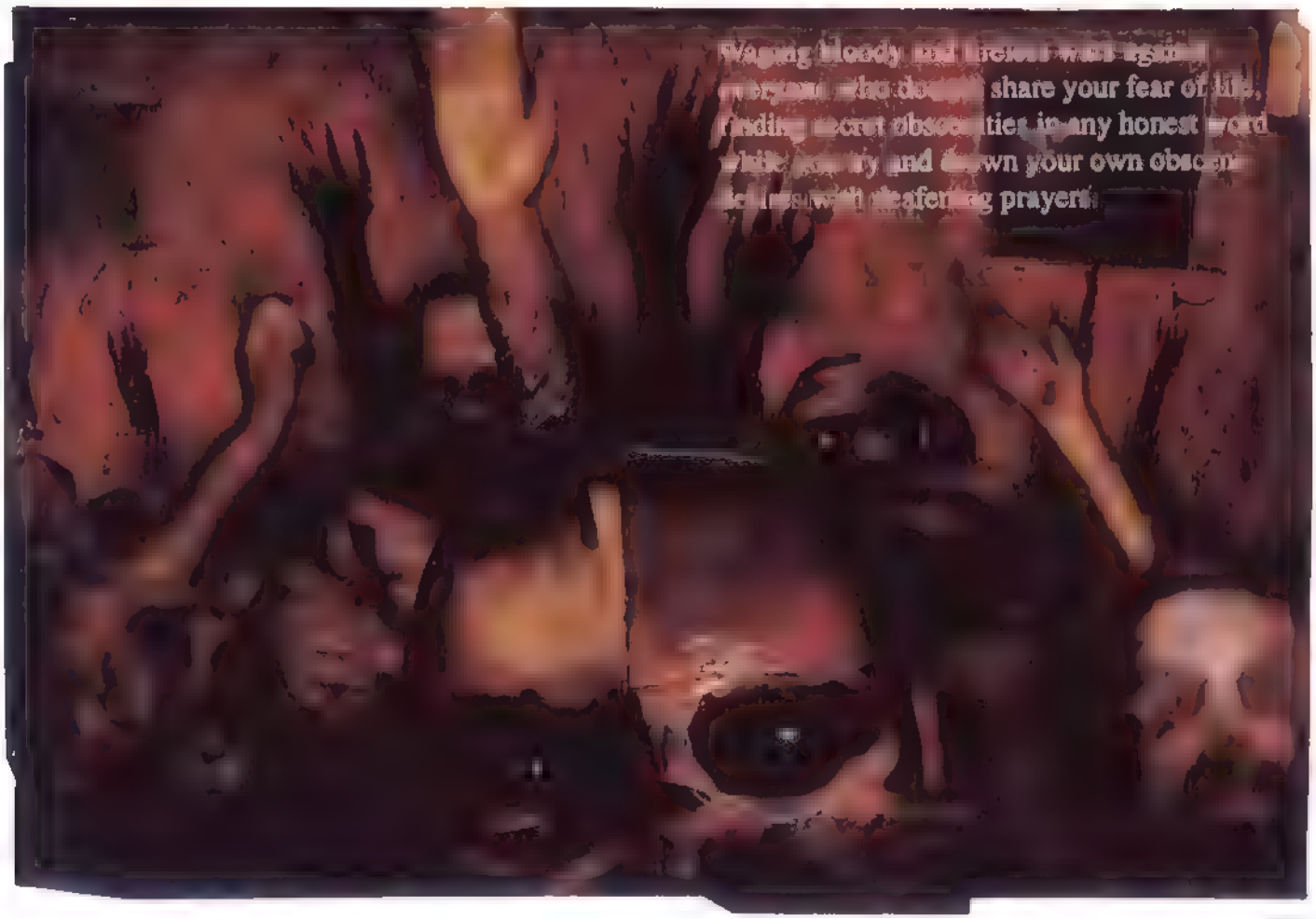
"She's gone"
Julia's brother sat against the far wall,
opposite the window, a grey statue
with grey eyes, unable to meet his.
There was no need to ask why,
yet 'why' was the only word he
could remember.
When she'd called the night before,
[illegible]
"My baby needs me", she'd managed
to exhale the words before choking
once more. "I love you. Please forgive me"
he knew they'd won.
DEATH
"Why?", the grey eyes closed,
"because Julia is a sensible woman,
she realises she has responsibilities..
"DON'T... lecture me, I'm not part
of your vicious little family.
Thank Christ I'm spared that purgatory.
The statue stood, shakily, keeping its
back to the wall, focussing on the window.
"Julia may have a great sin on her shoulders,
but we'll take care of her now, she'll be alright"
He hesitated for a second, and when Tomas
remained silent, he walked toward the door.

"Not a fucking spark!"

Tomas pushed him into the armchair where he sprawled awkwardly.
"There's not one fucking spark of imagination in there is there? And when you see a glimmer of life in someone else, a spark of passion..."

...you know...I am filled with such anger for the way you've treated her.
She was finally beginning to think for herself.


She'd finally learned to enjoy her life without being racked with guilt. My God, what a job you people did on her, and you call yourselves 'family'. What are you so afraid of?
And all this pious misery in the name of your psychopathic God.
You're all mad!


Wagging bloody tongues and fetid wombs against everyone who dares share your fear of life, finding secret obscenities in any honest word while you pray and drown your own obscenities with deafening prayers!

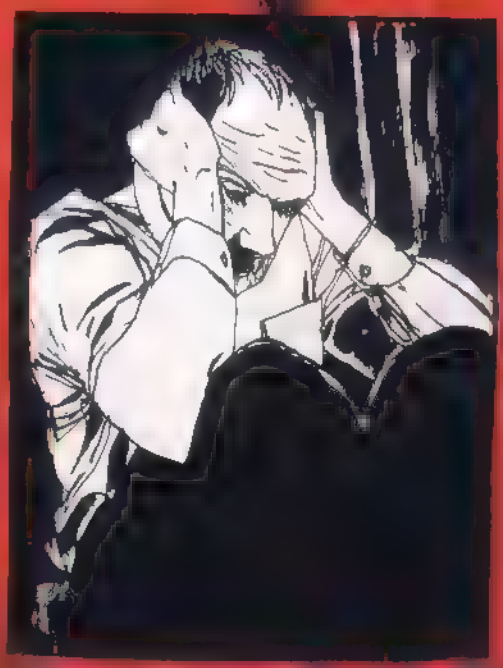
Well, you've got your own way.

You can go back to your hysterical church
and put sacks over your heads, and bind
and gag each other.

Put a clothes-peg on your dick and a
cork up your ass and offer your purity to that
idiot God you've invented.

But when you're righteously fingering
each other in the choir loft, remember that I know
You may be able to keep your nasty little
secrets from Him, but not from me.

My God, if your precious messiah fell to earth tomorrow, the poor fucker would probably open his wrists before letting you mutilate his heart or infect his brain or just...bugger the living juices out of him like you've buggered your own sister..."



The statue moved passed him.
"Julia doesn't want to see you again"

"GET OUT"

IMPROVISATION IN G IS EASY
IT ADAPTS TO ANY MOOD.
MAJOR OR MINOR
I USED TO HAVE A PAIR OF TROUSERS DE COLOUR OF G MAJOR
No... no wait...
What?..
Wait, shut up.. I wanna tell the story
Well tell the fuckin' thing...
I'm tryin', I swear..
Well go on then...
I swear .

We all waitin'...
I swear...
Shit, can't get a God-damn, paper-thin word in around here
Okay...
Tick, tick, tick
OKAY!
So there's Angel, okay.. an' he's been workin' for this guy., evenin' sessions
An' this guy who I won't name ..
Why, man...
Shit.
Well why?
'Cos it's not fuckin' revelant. man
Okay?
So this guy...
Relevant.

What?
You mean relevant.
Relevant. That's what I said, 'relevant'
You said 'revelant'
I said relevant. Why'd I say 'revelant' what the fuck does 'revelant' mean?
I don't know, you said it.
Man, I swear.
He said 'revelant'. I mean, you can check up, he said 'revelant'.
I said 'relevant', I meant 'relevant', an' if you don' drop it I'm gonna 'relevant' your fuckin' head, y'understan' what I'm sayin'.
So this guy's tryin' to rip Angel off...
Is this the one where Angel locked the guy up in the boot of his own car?
Is it?

GH's COOL.
It a... EMPTY TONE.
YEAH...
AN EIGHT-NOTE WASTELAND! THAT'S ALL
Dedication
For my wife Ellen for criticism and
hugs, two things I couldn't

440 HERTZ.
CONCERT 'A' IS DE NOTE DAT BRING ALL DE HINSTRUMENT OF DE WORLD TOGETHER.
IF WE EVER WANT TO UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER
WE NEED A CONCERT 'A'
Ay?
Oh yes. Mister . um. on the third floor Ever such a nice lad
Courteous you know pertinent Ever so pertinent
Do I mean pertinent?
Played me a tune on his flutey thing Lovely it was
Can seem a bit gruff Every now and then.
'Course that's because 'e's... you know...

Black
He is ! Black as an olive
Black as a black olive, I mean
Well he is !
You know me, calls a spade a shovel and has done with it
Nice lad, though
Odd nostrils...

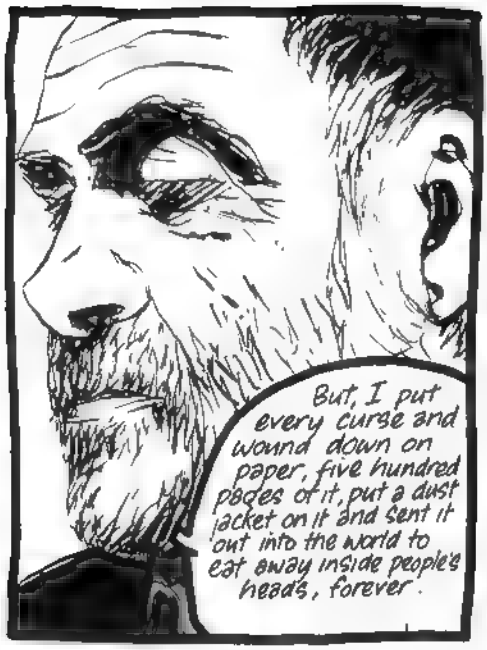
DE° KEY OF B♭ MAJOR IS RICH AND MYSTERIOUS! A STORM FORMIN'!
CUMULUS HARMONICS FOLDIN' AROUND EACH OTHER.
MANY VOICES, A CHORAL COMPLEX KEY REDOLENT WITH POSSIBILITY
Can I trust you?

Jonathan?
Can I trust you?
Before you say anything, you must know that I don't think I'm going to be able to open myself up like this again
I've run out of patience and hope and wits I don't have room in my life for acquaintances or small talk or anything except the truth... so tell me
Can I trust you?
Just a minute
That's Jonathan Rush!
I know.

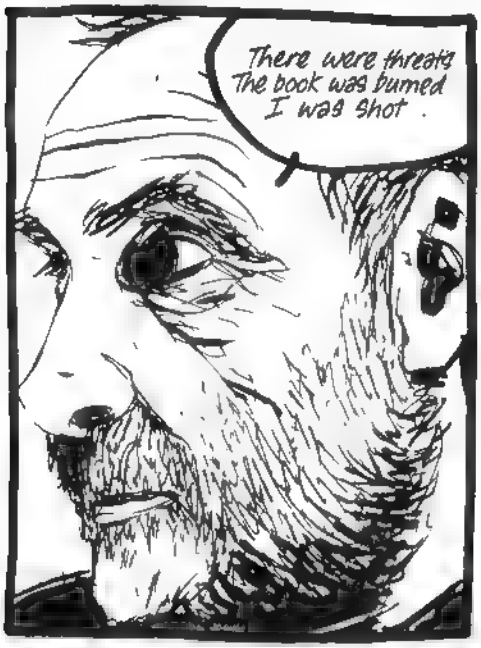
He's disappeared. I read the papers..and he just turns up on your doorstep?
He lives upstairs
WHAT?
Shhh.
Jesus..you saw the mob outside. That was because of him.
I know.
I don't believe you're being so calm about this. They'd've burned the bloody building down if they'd known he lived here.
But they don't know. Nobody knows except the people who are looking after him, and me...
...and now you.
What did he mean, can he trust you... what's going on?

I don't know.
Leo...
It's alright.
Stay there...
What's this about? Are you okay?
Christ, you look rough.
Thanks.
Don't mention it. Can I help?
I doubt it.
So?

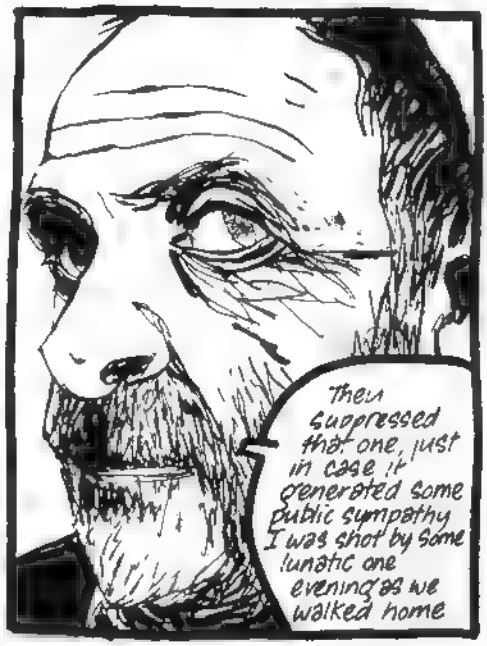
So... you know some of the story... When 'Cages' was published the reaction was violent...far worse than any of us imagined..
I know. I saw the riots.
I didn't mean for that to happen. It was just a book...
But it poked about inside people's heads and found some very tender places.
I was angry.
At God?
Yes... no, not at God. Jesus, I don't believe in God I... we... found out we couldn't have children.
No, it wasn't that. I was depressed and I felt frustrated, but nothing like the fury I felt watching Ellen tear herself in two, blaming herself, this was 'righteous justice' for her sins.
All the force-fed faith of her childhood rose to the surface like bile. She tried to kill herself I lashed out at everything and everybody
And I believe everyone has that anger in them and occasionally even lets it surface, but then after they scream and kick and bite for a while, it subsides... life goes on...

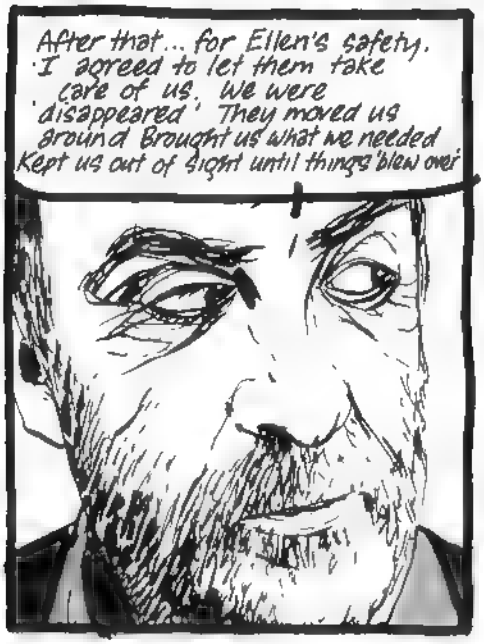

But, I put every curse and wound down on paper, five hundred pages of it, put a dust jacket on it and sent it out into the world to eat away inside people's heads, forever.

You know all this..


There were threats The book was burned I was shot.

What?


They suppressed that one, just in case it generated some public sympathy I was shot by some lunatic one evening as we walked home


After that... for Ellen's safety. I agreed to let them take care of us. We were 'disappeared'. They moved us around. Brought us what we needed. Kept us out of sight until things blew over.

That must have been.. a year ago?
Two

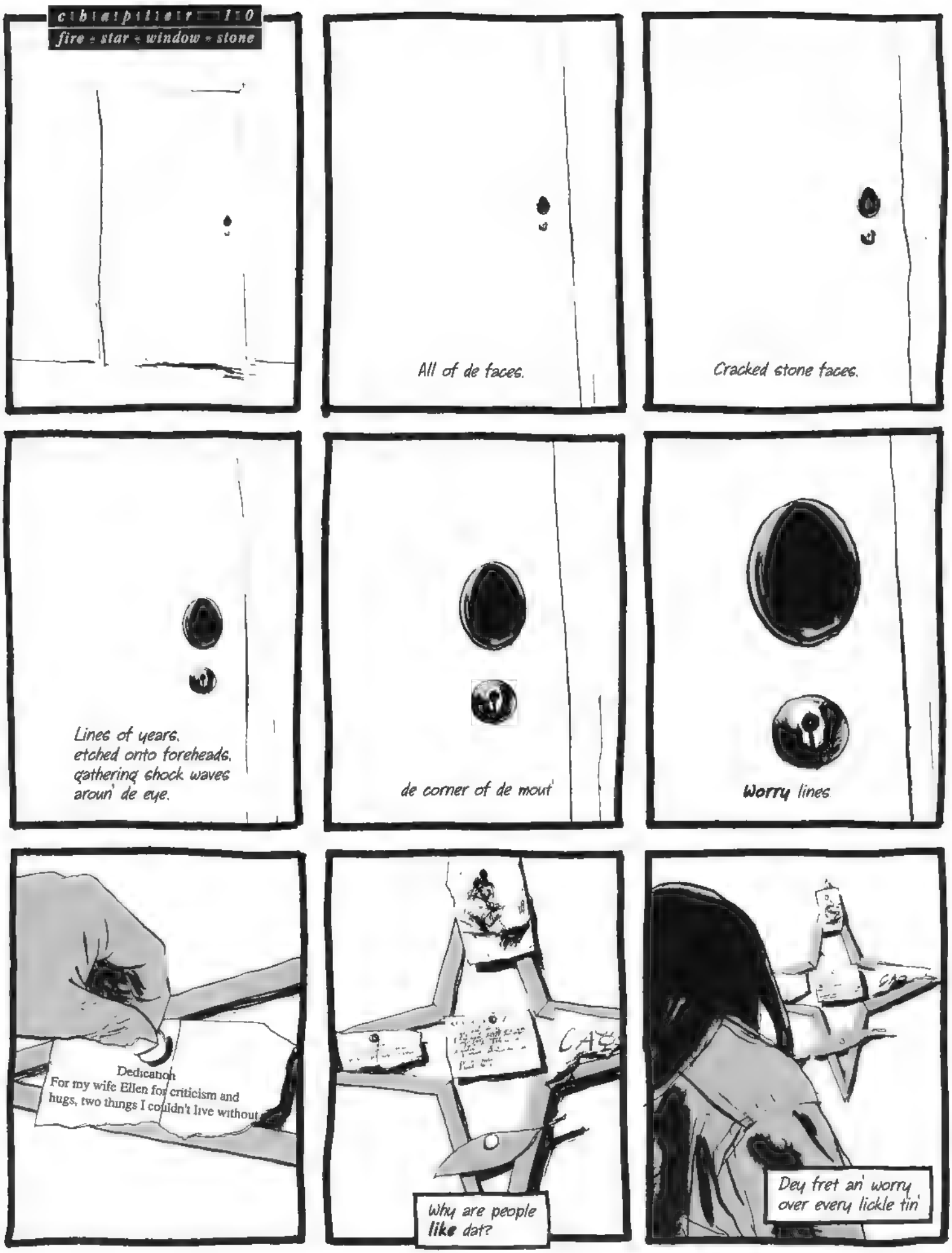
Shit.

Only things never did 'blow over'. I sometimes think they keep the demonstrations going just to keep me locked up.
Why?
Why? Because I upset a lot of people..because what I said might be true. I don't know...
Whatever it seems I'm in debt to the world for the 'damage' I've done, so they pick away at us. at our souls
What do you mean?
They're playing some sort of game with us, only we don't know what the rules are. We can guess. and all we can do is sit in our five-room cage, feeling their sticky fingers picking through our brains...
That sounds very anatomical, gents.
Oh, don't mind me. I'm just a busy-body with a feather-flick

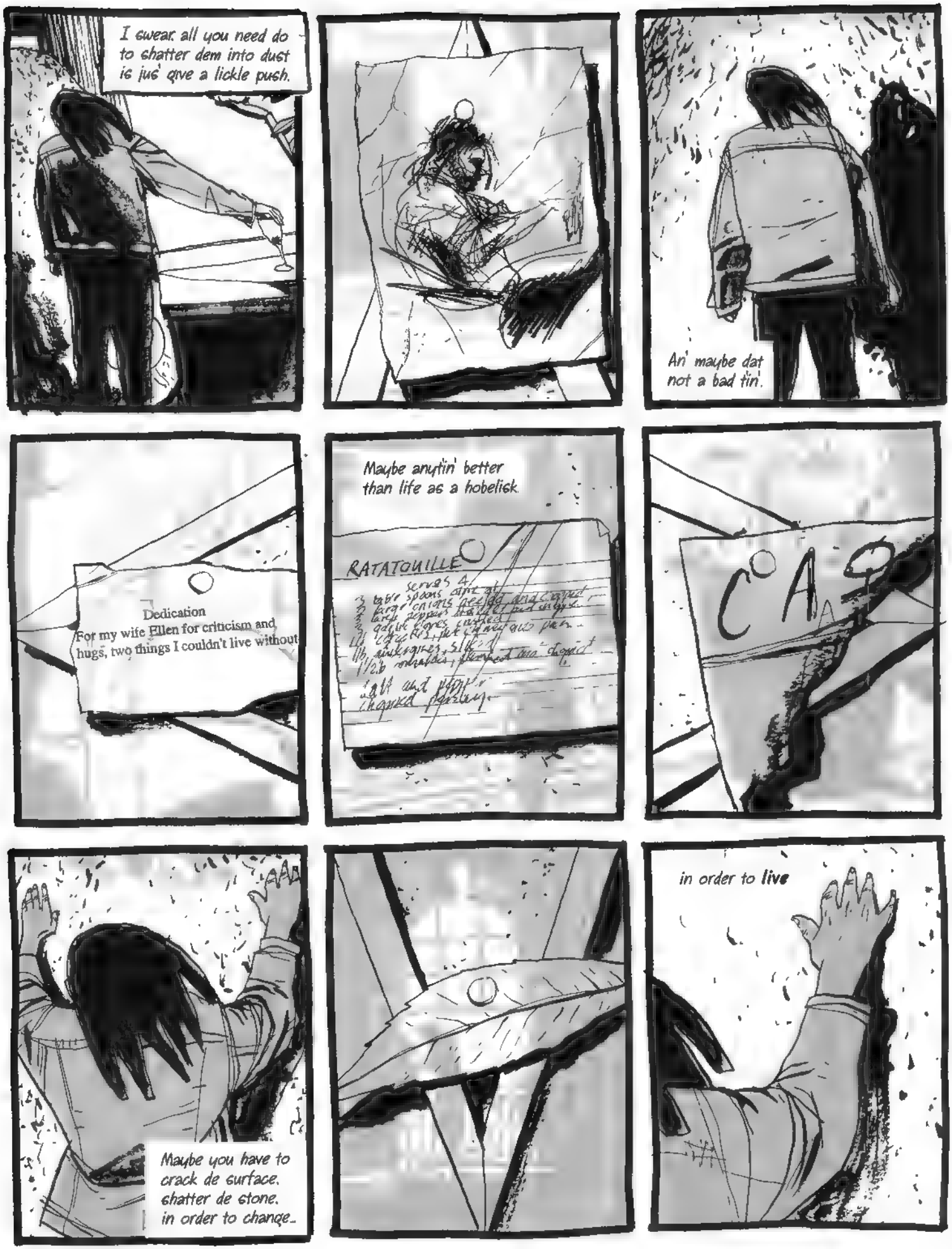
There we go.
The wind's changed direction and the pigeons are getting broody
Cheerio
So I'm asking you... can I trust you?
Sure, but what can I do?
I don't know
But I'm going to lose what little 'self' I've got left soon, and I really don't think Ellen's going to keep it together much longer.

We have no friends or family to call on. We are completely alone, with the whole world for an enemy. All we need is to escape.
Where would you go?
I don't know, but anywhere they can't get us... Anywhere away from here.
We're stuck to the bottom of a microscope. We just need to slip off the slide.
Can we talk?..
Don't get involved.

WE ARE NEARLY BACK TO WHERE WE STARTED.
DE KEY OF B MAJOR IS ALSO A SOMBRE PLACE.
A FINAL SERIOUS NOTE OF REFLECTION, BEFORE THE RESOLUTION TO 'C'
TO ENTER DE ROOM YOU NEED DE KEY
C MINOR THIS TIME.
WE ALL NEEDS A CHANGE..


chapter 10
fire + star + window + stone
All of de faces.
Cracked stone faces.
Lines of years.
etched onto foreheads.
gathering shock waves
aroun' de eye.
de corner of de mout'
Worry lines
Dedication
For my wife Ellen for criticism and
hugs, two things I couldn't live without
Why are people
like dat?
Dey fret an' worry
over every lickle tin'

Hoccupyin' d'eir space like a qreat. bleak hobelisk.
stickin' in de eart'.
Rock 'ard.
Lookin' at de stars


I swear. all you need do to shatter dem into dust is jus' give a lickle push.
An' maybe dat not a bad tin'.
Dedication
For my wife Ellen for criticism and hugs, two things I couldn't live without
Maybe anytin' better than life as a hobelick.
RATATOUILLE
serves 4
CAS
Maybe you have to crack de surface. shatter de stone. in order to change..
in order to **live**

A small pressure.
a gentle stroke of de stone.
to find de resonant note.
like de rim of de crystal glass . . .
Surely, jus' a lickle push can't do dat much harm..

What have you found, Petal?
Stone.
Oh, yes. Are you going to bring it with you?
Come on, let's get back to the fire, shall we.

Let's sit down here, petal. What do you want tonight's story to be about?
Stone.
What, your stone?
Well, let's see.
And a king.
The story of the stone and the king.
Once upon a time, a time many, many moons ago in fact, and once upon a place, a place far, far away from here, there was a big city.
How big was the city?
How big?

How big?

Well, this city was so big
that many of the people
who lived there refused to believe
there was anything beyond the city.
They would walk and walk and
never leave the bright lights
and tall buildings.

AND DO YOU KNOW WHO RULED OVER THE CITY?
EVERY PERSON WHO LIVED THERE?
WHO OWNED EVERY HOUSE AND TREE AND ANIMAL AND BIRD?
AND STONE?
YES, AND STONE. CAN YOU GUESS?
THE KING!

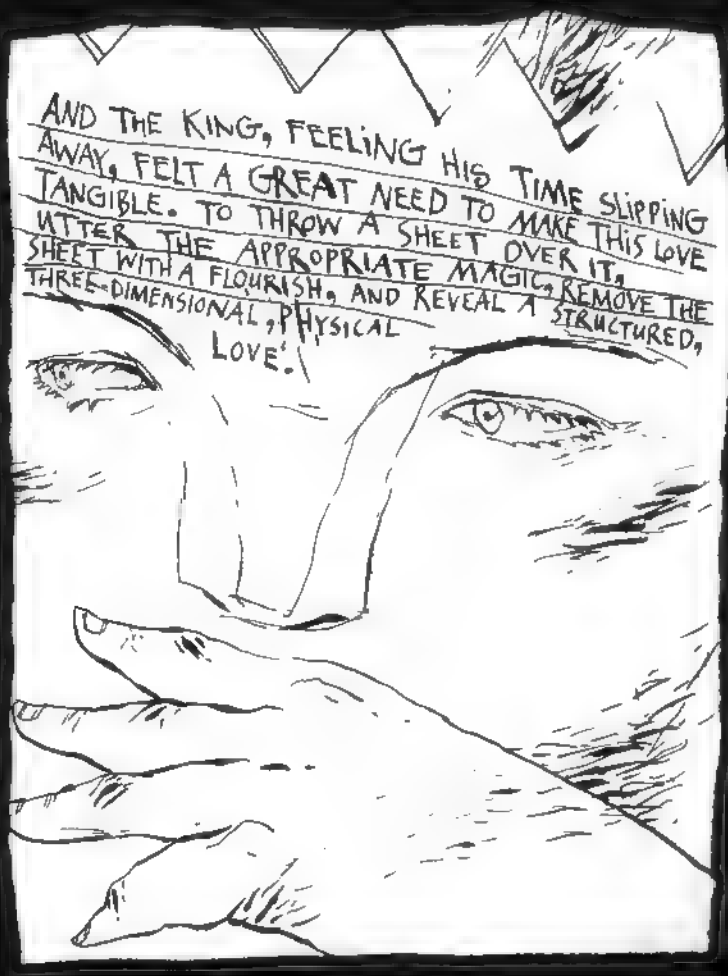
YES.

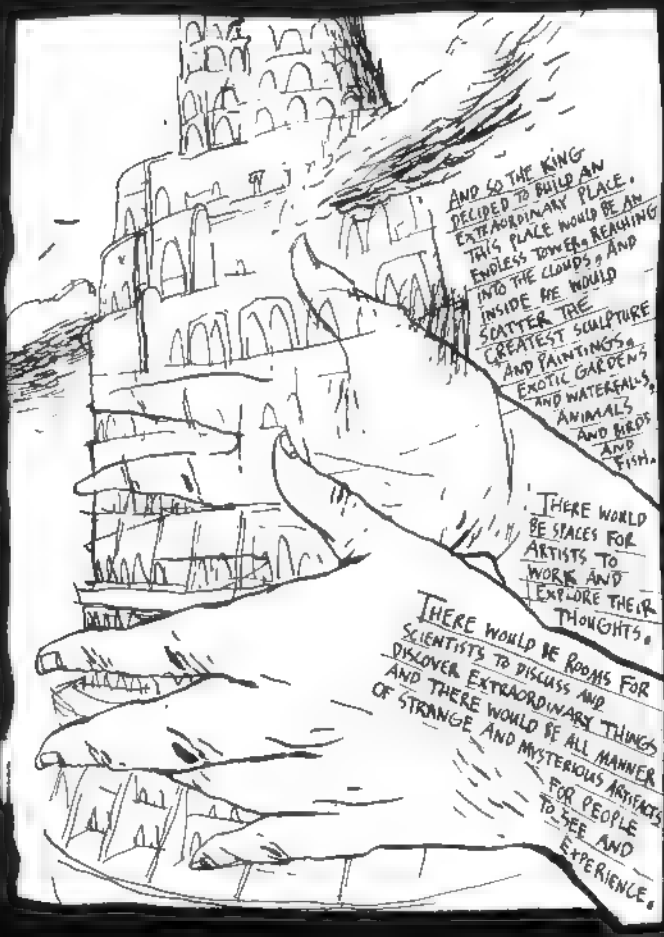
THAT'S RIGHT, THE KING OF THE CITY.

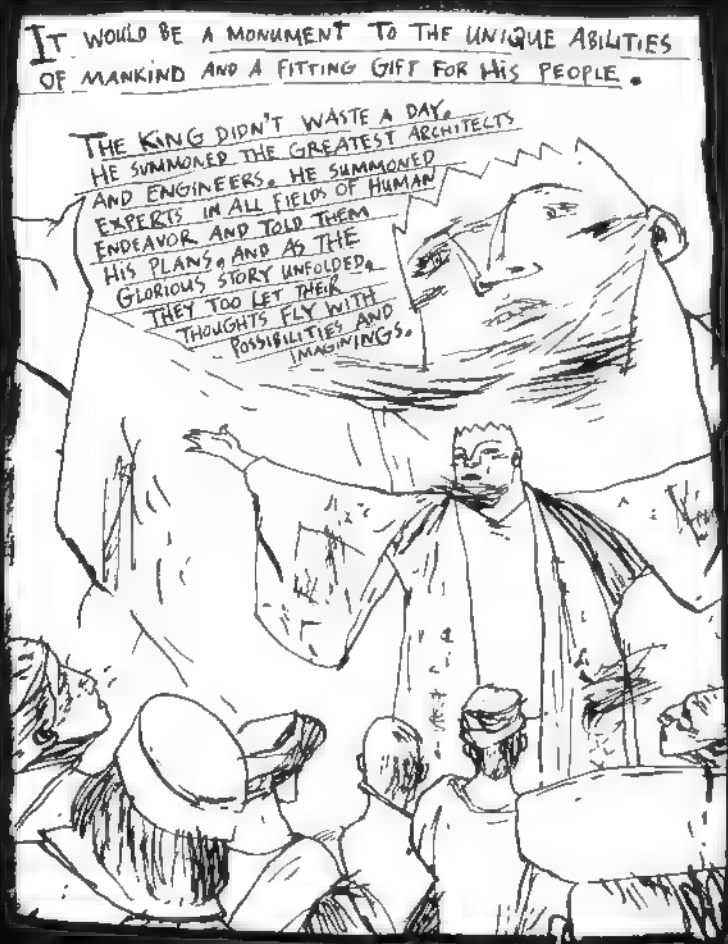
AND THE KING WAS HAPPY BECAUSE HIS SUBJECTS WERE HAPPY. THE CITY THRIVED, BUSINESSES FLOURISHED, AND THE PEOPLE LIVED TOGETHER WITH UNDERSTANDING AND KINDNESS.

IT TRULY WAS A HEAVEN ON EARTH.

On the King's fiftieth birthday there were celebrations and carnivals. His people showed their love for the king with presents and well-wishes.


And the King, feeling his time slipping away, felt a great need to make this love tangible. To throw a sheet over it, utter the appropriate magic, remove the sheet with a flourish, and reveal a structured, three-dimensional, physical love!


And so the King decided to build an extraordinary place. This place would be an endless tower, reaching into the clouds, and inside he would scatter the greatest sculpture and paintings, exotic gardens and waterfalls, animals and birds and fish.
There would be spaces for artists to work and explore their thoughts.
There would be rooms for scientists to discuss and discover extraordinary things and there would be all manner of strange and mysterious artifacts for people to see and experience.


It would be a monument to the unique abilities of mankind and a fitting gift for his people.
The King didn't waste a day. He summoned the greatest architects and engineers. He summoned experts in all fields of human endeavor and told them his plans, and as the glorious story unfolded, they too let their thoughts fly with possibilities and imaginings.

THE WORK BEGAN AFTER THE KING AND HIS ADVISERS HAD FOUND THE RIGHT PLACE TO BUILD.

PEOPLE FROM ALL OVER THE CITY CAME TO VOLUNTEER THEIR SERVICES. THE WHOLE CITY BRIMMED WITH EXCITEMENT. THE KING'S TOWER BECAME A FOCUS OF SPECULATION AND PRIDE. AND SOON THE FOUNDATIONS WERE LAID.

IN THE KING'S CHAMBERS, GROUPS OF PEOPLE CAME AND WENT. ALL OPINIONS WERE LISTENED TO, JUDGMENTS WERE MADE, INSTRUCTIONS PASSED ON, PLANS DRAWN UP, MATERIALS AMASSED AND WORKERS ASSIGNED.

THE WALLS ROSE, ORNAMENTED, FLOWING NATURAL ARCHWAYS AND ALCOVES; SCULPTORS AND BUILDERS TOLD STORIES WITH CEMENT AND STONE, WEAVING PATTERNS AND TEXTURES, PLAYING WITH LIGHT AND FALLING WITH SHADOWS; CREATING A LIVING THING.

INSIDE, SPACES OF EXQUISITE PROPORTION WERE PREPARED. THE SCIENCES OF GEOMETRY AND PURE MATHEMATICS HELPED TO DEFINE THE LENGTHS OF CORRIDORS AND THE RADII OF WINDOWS. AND CLEAR EYES JUDGED THE AESTHETICS OF BALANCE AND TENSION, DRAMA AND RELEASE, AND THE WALLS CONTINUED TO RISE.

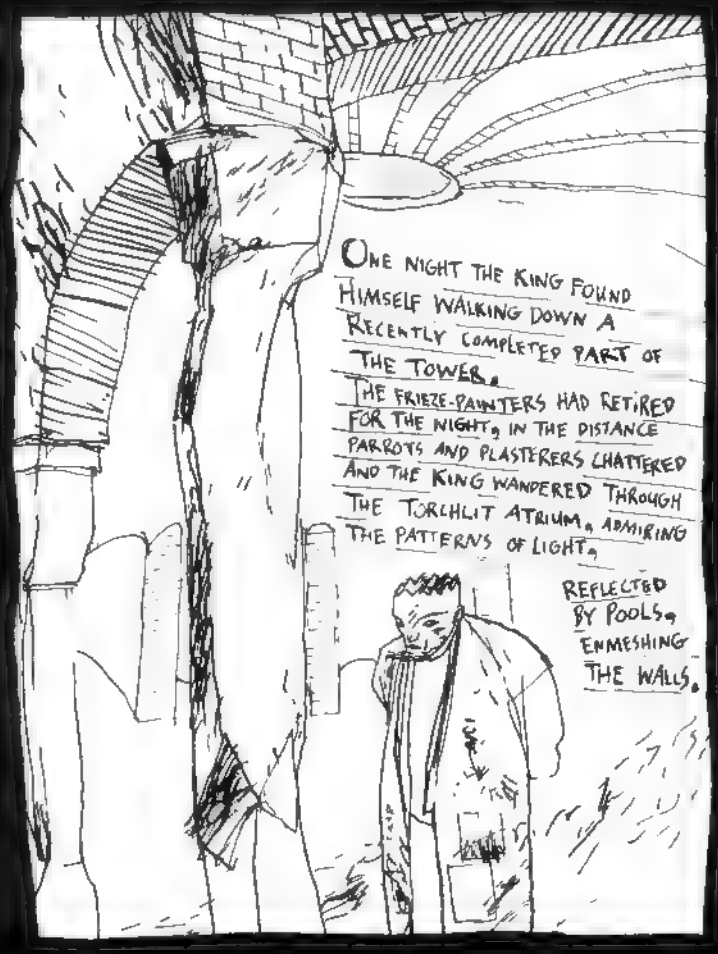
MANY OF THE OBJECTS AND EXTRAVAGANCES WERE BEING PREPARED IN STUDIOS AND WORKSHOPS AROUND THE CITY. WRITERS AND POETS DOCUMENTED THIS MOST VIVID OF TIMES, COMPOSING ILLUSIVE VERSE AND SALIENT PROSE BY DAY, EXCHANGING HEATED OPINION IN A EUPHORIC WINE-HAZE BY NIGHT.

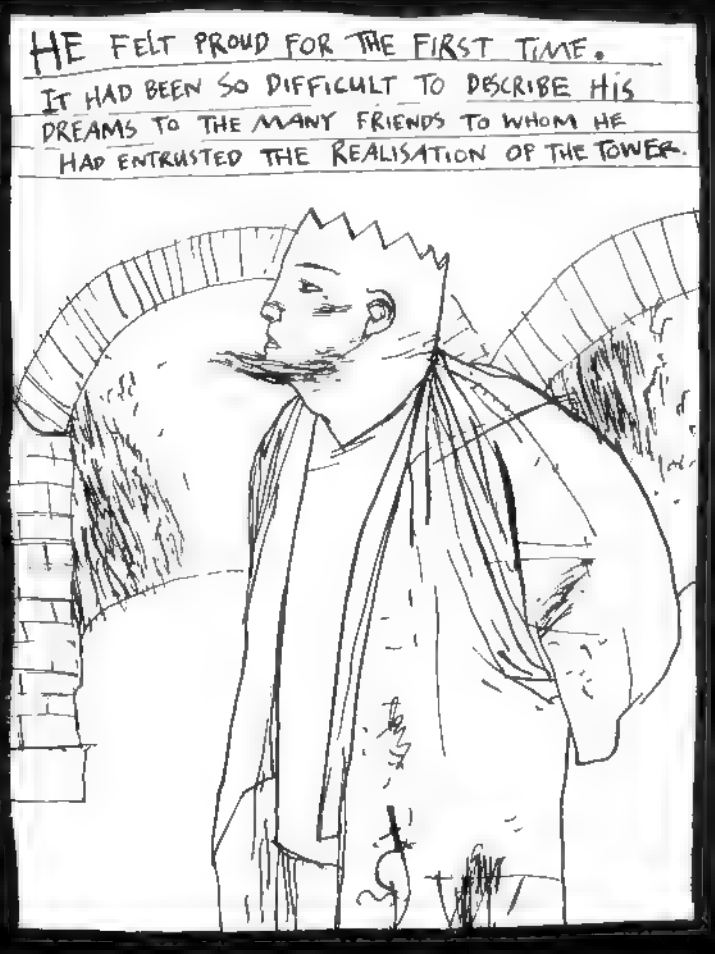
THE TOWER IS A RECEIVER THROUGH WHICH WE HEAR GOD'S THOUGHTS.

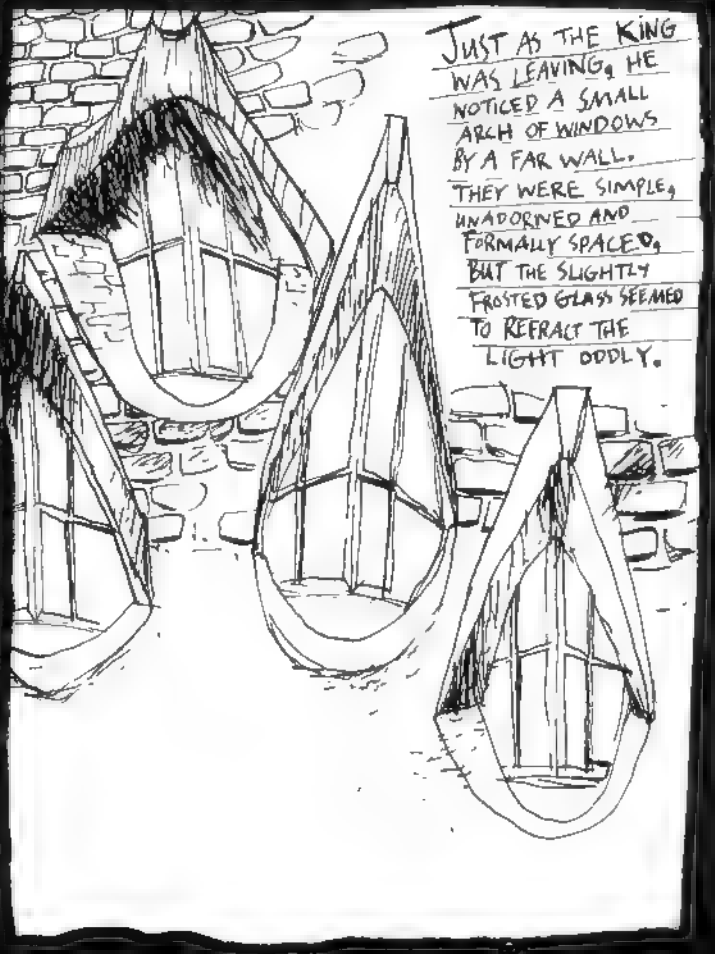
THE TOWER IS A HUMAN HAND REACHING FOR THE STARS.

THE TOWER IS AN INDEX OF POSSIBILITIES.

THE TOWER IS HOPE.


One night the King found himself walking down a recently completed part of the tower.
The frieze-painters had retired for the night, in the distance parrots and plasterers chattered and the King wandered through the torchlit atrium, admiring the patterns of light,
reflected by pools, enmeshing the walls.


He felt proud for the first time.
It had been so difficult to describe his dreams to the many friends to whom he had entrusted the realisation of the tower.

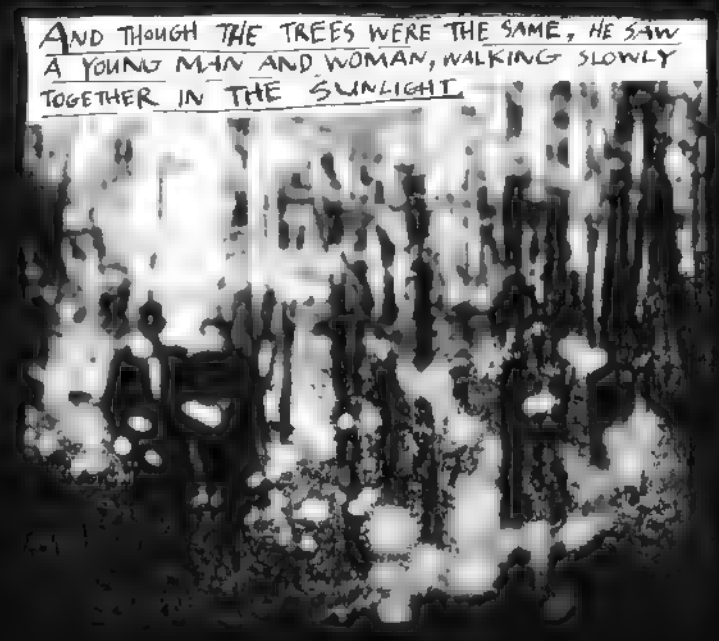

Just as the King was leaving, he noticed a small arch of windows by a far wall.
They were simple, unadorned and formally spaced, but the slightly frosted glass seemed to refract the light oddly.

THE KING WALKED TOWARD THE WINDOWS. HE COULDN'T MAKE OUT CLEARLY WHAT WAS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE GLASS.

AS HE LOOKED CLOSELY THROUGH THE FIRST, HE THOUGHT HE SAW A CHILD PLAYING IN THE WOODS, HIDING AND SEEKING WITH HIS FRIENDS.

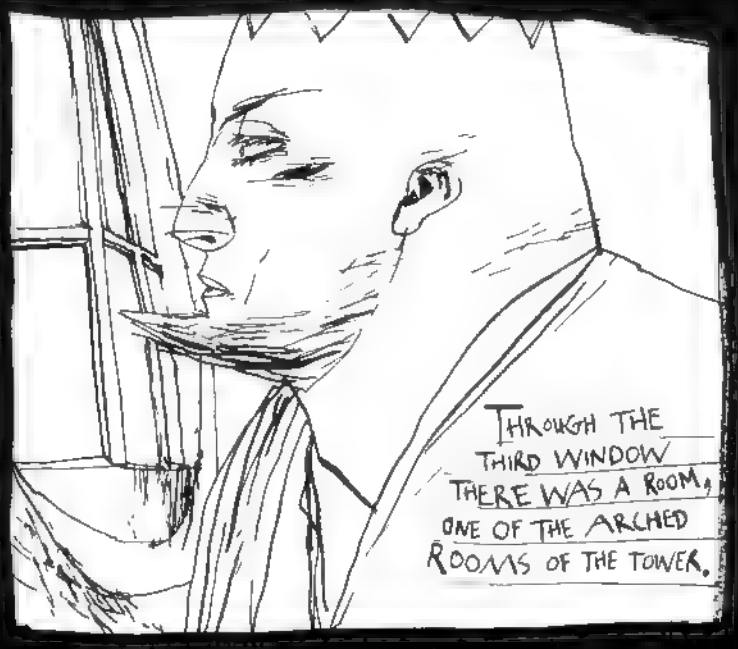
THE TREES WERE BIRCHES, RIVERS AND COPPERS, SIMILAR TO THE WOODLAND SURROUNDING THE HOUSE HE GREW UP IN AS A BOY. THE DAPPLED SHADOWS, HAZY AND DIFFUSE, SEEMED TO ENGULF THE CHILD.

WHEN THE BOY HAD GONE HE LOOKED THROUGH THE SECOND WINDOW.


AND THOUGH THE TREES WERE THE SAME, HE SAW A YOUNG MAN AND WOMAN, WALKING SLOWLY TOGETHER IN THE SUNLIGHT.

THE KING WAS FILLED WITH MEMORIES.

HE THOUGHT, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN TWENTY, THIRTY YEARS OF THE LOVES OF HIS YOUTH, AND OF THE ONE LOVE IN PARTICULAR, THE YOUNG CANDLEMAKER WITH WHOM HE HAD SHARED HIS DEEPEST THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS, BEFORE HIS ADULT RESPONSIBILITIES TOOK HOLD OF HIS LIFE.



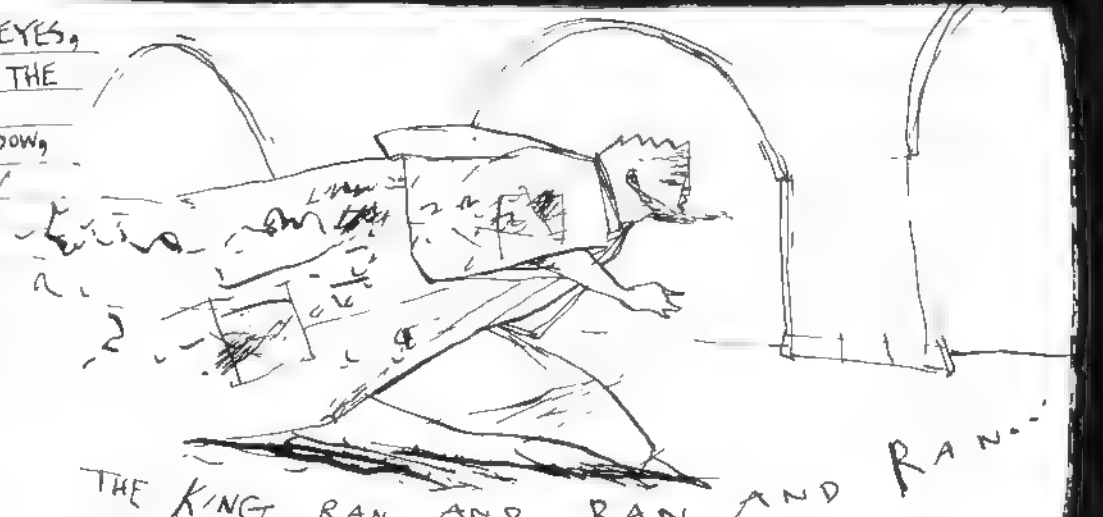
THROUGH THE THIRD WINDOW THERE WAS A ROOM, ONE OF THE ARCHED ROOMS OF THE TOWER.

THE KING COULDN'T BELIEVE WHAT HE SAW.

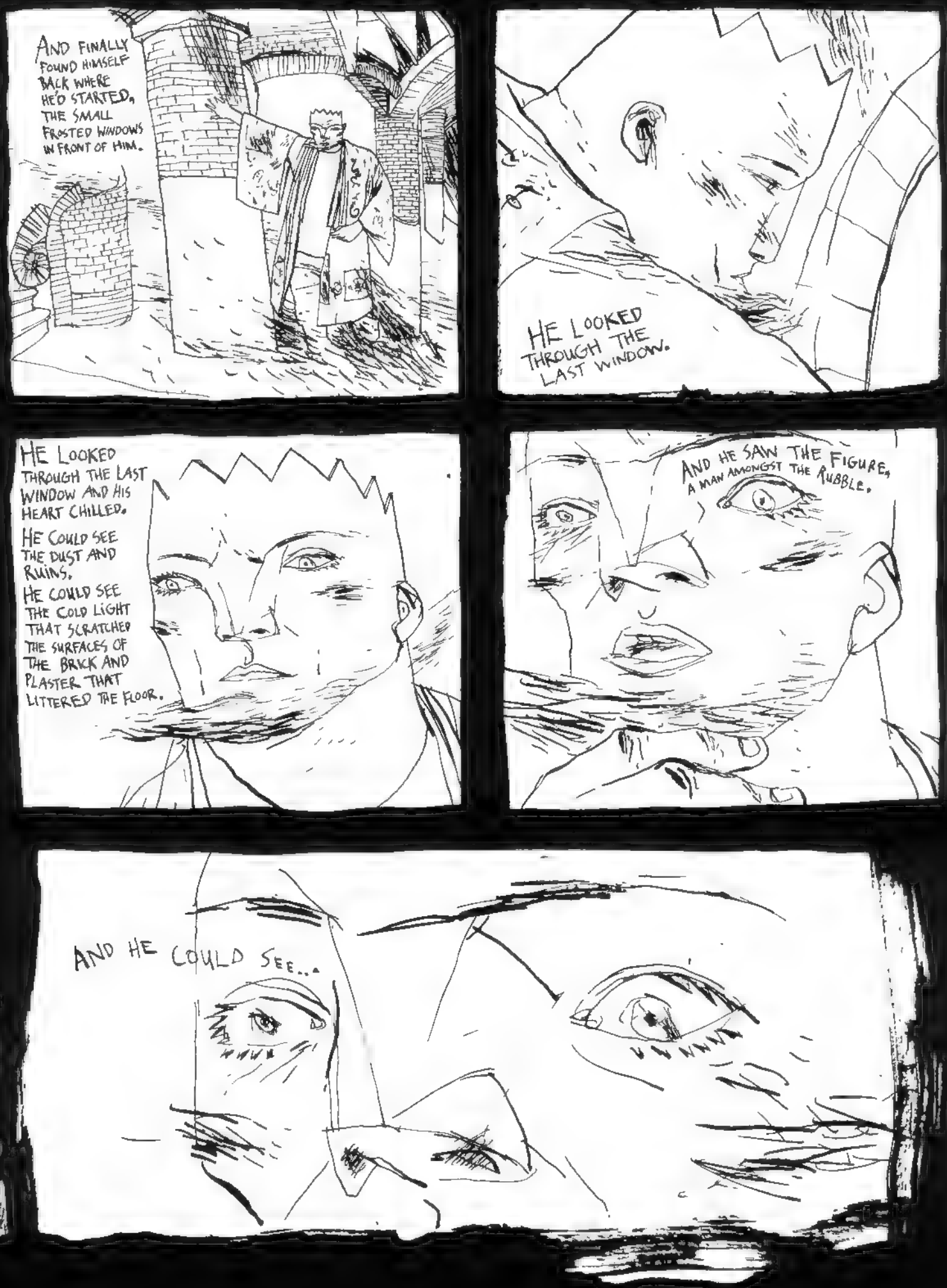
THE FLOOR WAS LITTERED WITH REPRODUCTIONS IN WOOD AND ON PAPER OF THE TOWER, BUT NOT IN ITS PRESENT STATE, TWELVE LEVELS HIGH AND COVERED IN SCAFFOLDING, BUT AS HE HAD ONLY EVER SEEN IT IN HIS HEAD. COMPLETE AND PERFECT, CARESSED BY CLOUDS AND POINTING TOWARDS THE STARS.

THE KING RUBBED HIS EYES, AND THEN RAN THROUGH THE CORRIDORS TO TRY TO FIND THE ROOM BEHIND THE WINDOW, BUT NONE OF THE ROOMS HE DISCOVERED CONTAINED THE PAPERS AND MODELS HE HAD SEEN.

INDEED, NONE OF THE ROOMS CONTAINED MUCH OF ANYTHING, JUST EMPTY SPACES AWAITING DECORATION AND OCCUPANTS.



THE KING RAN AND RAN AND RAN...


AND FINALLY FOUND HIMSELF BACK WHERE HE'D STARTED, THE SMALL FROSTED WINDOWS IN FRONT OF HIM.
HE LOOKED THROUGH THE LAST WINDOW.
HE LOOKED THROUGH THE LAST WINDOW AND HIS HEART CHILLED.
HE COULD SEE THE DUST AND RUINS.
HE COULD SEE THE COLD LIGHT THAT SCRATCHED THE SURFACES OF THE BRICK AND PLASTER THAT LITTERED THE FLOOR.
AND HE SAW THE FIGURE, A MAN AMONGST THE RUBBLE.
AND HE COULD SEE...

WHO MADE THESE WINDOWS?
SHOUTED THE KING

HIS ADVISERS, SHOCKED BY THE KING'S MANNER THAT MORNING, WHISPERED AMONGST THEMSELVES.

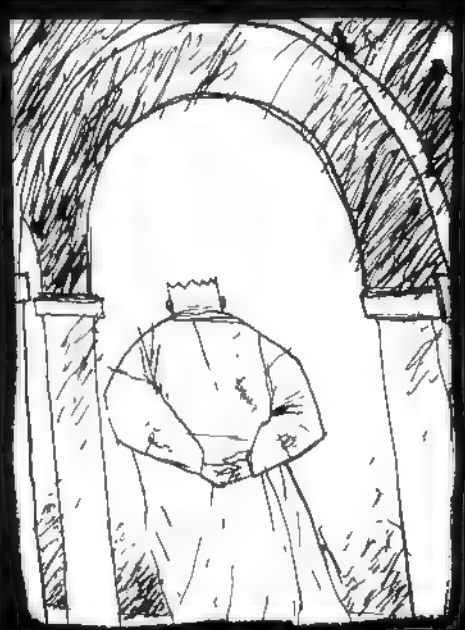
I WANT TO SEE THE PERSON WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THESE WINDOWS.

I THINK THAT PARTICULAR WINDOW WAS A PROJECT OF ONE OF MY STUDENTS,
AN ELDERLY ALCHEMIST STEPPED FORWARD
HE SAID FALTERINGLY

ONE OF YOUR STUDENTS?
YES.

WELL, BRING HIM HERE.

BRING HIM HERE!



YES?

YOU WANTED TO SEE ME YOUR HIGHNESS,
YOU ..MADE THESE WINDOWS? YOU'RE JUST A BOY.
I'M A STUDENT OF MY FATHER, SIGNOR ANGELO, THE ALCHEMIST.
OH, HE'S YOUR FATHER, IS HE?
COME HERE, BOY. TELL ME ABOUT THESE WINDOWS YOU HAVE CREATED.
THE WINDOWS? WELL, THEY'RE JUST AHHM... FROSTED GLASS WINDOWS.
WHAT KIND OF GLASS IS THIS?
IT'S VERY FRAGILE GLASS, SIR, AND VERY SENSITIVE.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "SENSITIVE"?
WELL, IT'S... SENSITIVE TO LIGHT AND TEMPERATURE, AND...
...TIME.

FOR MANY DAYS THE KING REFUSED TO SEE ANYONE, REMAINING IN HIS CHAMBERS, ALONE, BARELY EATING OR SLEEPING.

THEN ONE NIGHT, HE WALKED UNSEEN FROM HIS PALACE ACROSS THE CITY TOWARDS THE TOWER, HIS HEART RACING.
AS HE CLIMBED THE STAIRWAY HIS MIND WAS FULL OF THE CONVERSATIONS HE'D HAD WITH HIMSELF OVER THE LAST FEW RESTLESS DAYS.

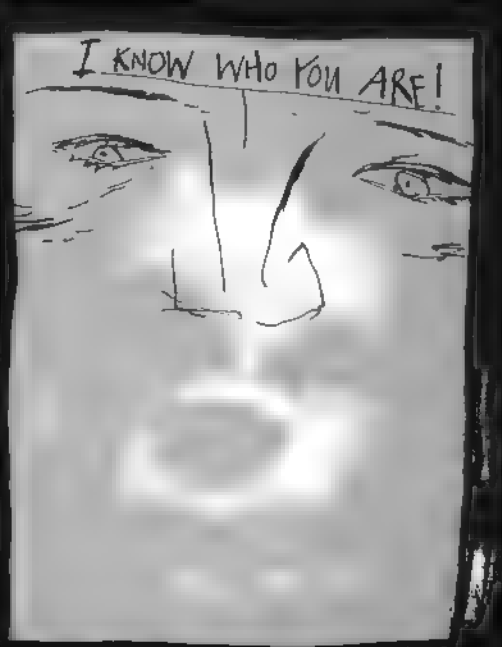
HE THUMPED THE GLASS WITH HIS HAND, FRIGHTENED TO BREAK IT, BUT NEEDING TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE MAN IN THE ROOM BELOW.

THE MAN LOOKED UP.
HE SEEMED TO HAVE BEEN EXPECTING THE KING.

OF COURSE. YOU WERE EXPECTING ME.
WHISPERED THE KING
TO HIMSELF.

CAN YOU HEAR ME?

YES. YOU'RE VERY FAINT, BUT I CAN HEAR YOU.


I KNOW WHO YOU ARE!

WHAT HAPPENED? WHAT COULD POSSIBLY HAVE CAUSED THIS?

Heh... WHERE TO START...

START AT THE BEGINNING.

THERE IS NO BEGINNING. THAT'S THE POINT. THE REASON THINGS ARE THE WAY THEY ARE IS A RESULT OF AN ENDLESS STREAM OF EVENTS, AN INFINITE ARRAY OF FORCES SHAPING WHAT HAPPENS TO US. BUT IF YOU NEED A BEGINNING, THEN IT BEGAN WITH A STONE.

A STONE?

YES, A STONE PLACED ON A MAP. DO YOU REMEMBER?

YES, I REMEMBER

WITH THAT DECISION, THE GROUND WAS CLEARED, THE WOODLAND WAS CUT DOWN, THE BIRCH WOODS WHERE YOU PLAYED AS A LITTLE BOY. DO YOU REMEMBER?

YES, THE STONE COVERED MANY ACRES ON THE MAP. THIRTY OF THOSE ACRES WERE WOODLANDS. MANY MORE PROVIDED FOOD FOR ANIMALS AND BIRDS AND MOST OF ALL, INSECTS.

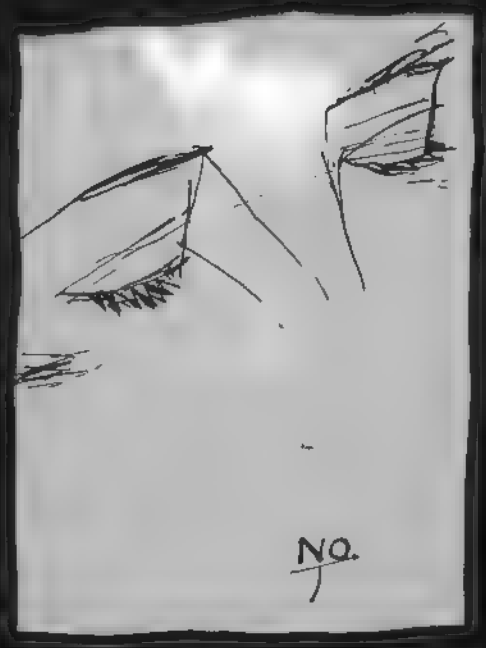
WHEN THE TOWER WAS BEGUN, ALL THESE CREATURES HAD TO LIVE SOMEWHERE, SO THEY MOVED TO OTHER AREAS, INHABITED AREAS. CROPS WERE LOST FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER. DISEASE STARTED TO SPREAD...

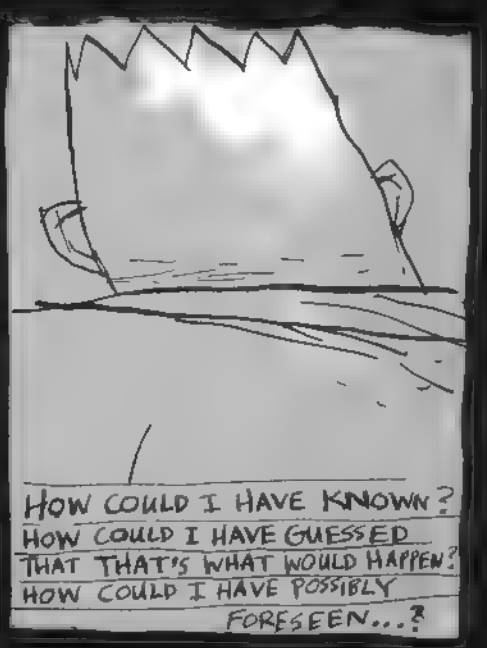
MEANWHILE AS THE TOWER GREW, ITS SHADOW BLOCKED OUT THE SUN. MANY PEOPLE, MANY THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE LIVING AT THE BASE OF THE TOWER BARELY SAW ANY SUN AT ALL. THEY GREW PALE AND MOROSE. THEY LOST THEIR PLANTS AND GARDENS, AND BEGAN TO RESENT THE TOWERING WALL THAT STOLE THEIR LIGHT.

AND THEN WHEN THE ANIMALS AND BIRDS WERE MOVED INTO THE TOWER, INEVITABLY SOME ESCAPED, COLONIZING AREAS OF THE CITY, WIPING OUT LOCAL POPULATIONS OF PETS AND DESTROYING PRODUCE. THE LARGER ONES EVEN STARTED STEALING CHILDREN AND WRECKING HOUSES.

AND FINALLY, EVEN THOUGH THE TOWER HAD SURVIVED TO COMPLETION, EVEN THEN, THE SEEDS OF DISSENT WERE SOWN. YOUR DREAMS AND PLANS SOUNDED WONDERFUL, THEY SOUNDED "PERFECT" BUT WHAT ALL YOUR ARCHITECTS AND PHILOSOPHERS AND ARTISTS AND WORKERS HEARD IN THEIR HEADS AS YOU DESCRIBED THEM WAS THEIR OWN IDEA OF PERFECTION. CERTAINLY THE BUILDING WAS EXTRAORDINARY, BUT IT'S THE PEOPLE WITHIN THAT GIVE IT PURPOSE, AND SOME PEOPLE, MANY PEOPLE, WERE UNSATISFIED WITH HOW THE SPACE WAS DIVIDED, WHO WAS ALLOWED TO WORK THERE, WHAT WAS SHOWN, AND SOON MANY PEOPLE BEGAN, NOT ONLY TO BE DISAPPOINTED, BUT TO ACTUALLY HATE THE TOWER, WITH THAT SPECIAL HATRED RESERVED FOR THOSE THINGS OR PEOPLE WE FEEL BETRAYED BY.

DO I HAVE TO GO ON?

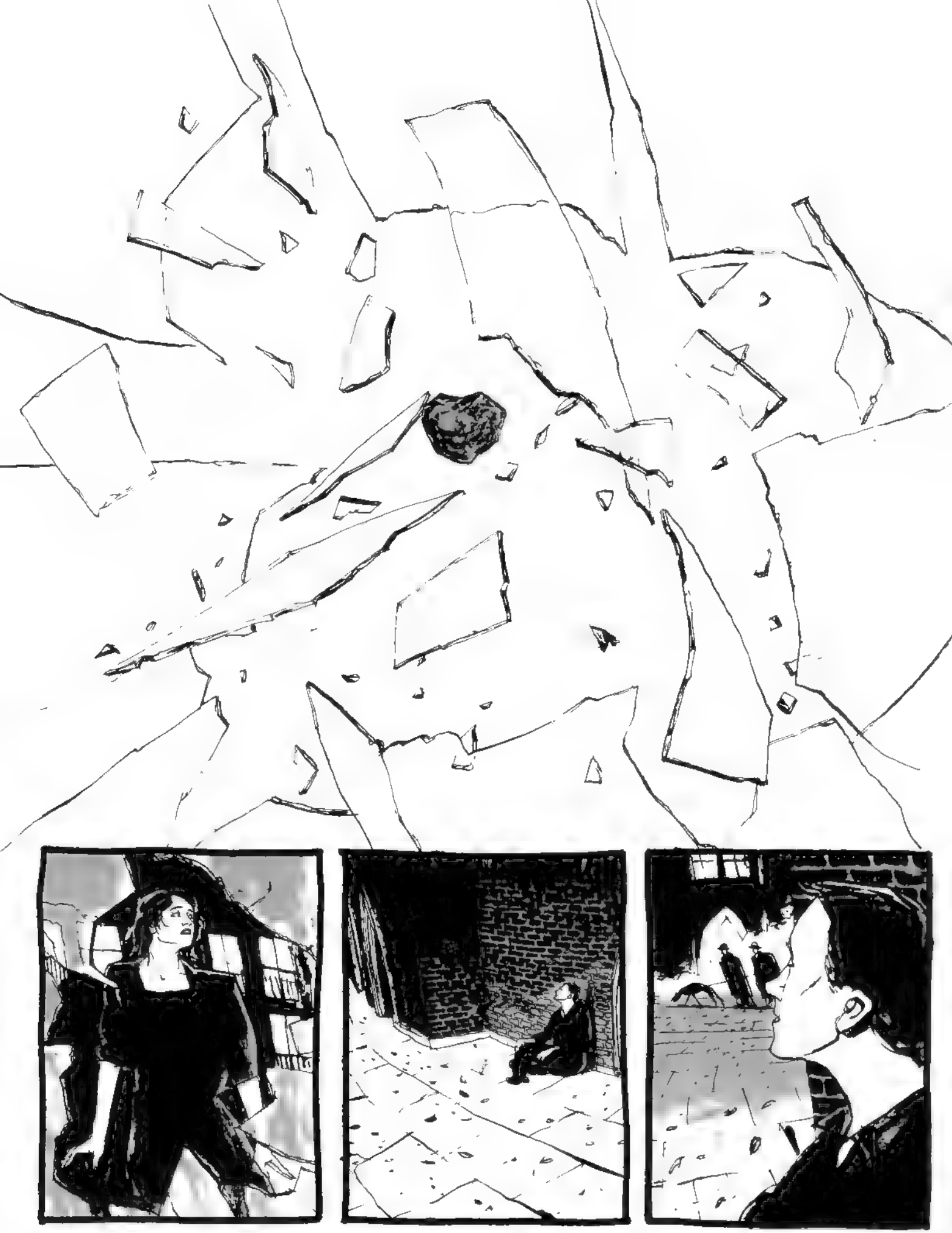


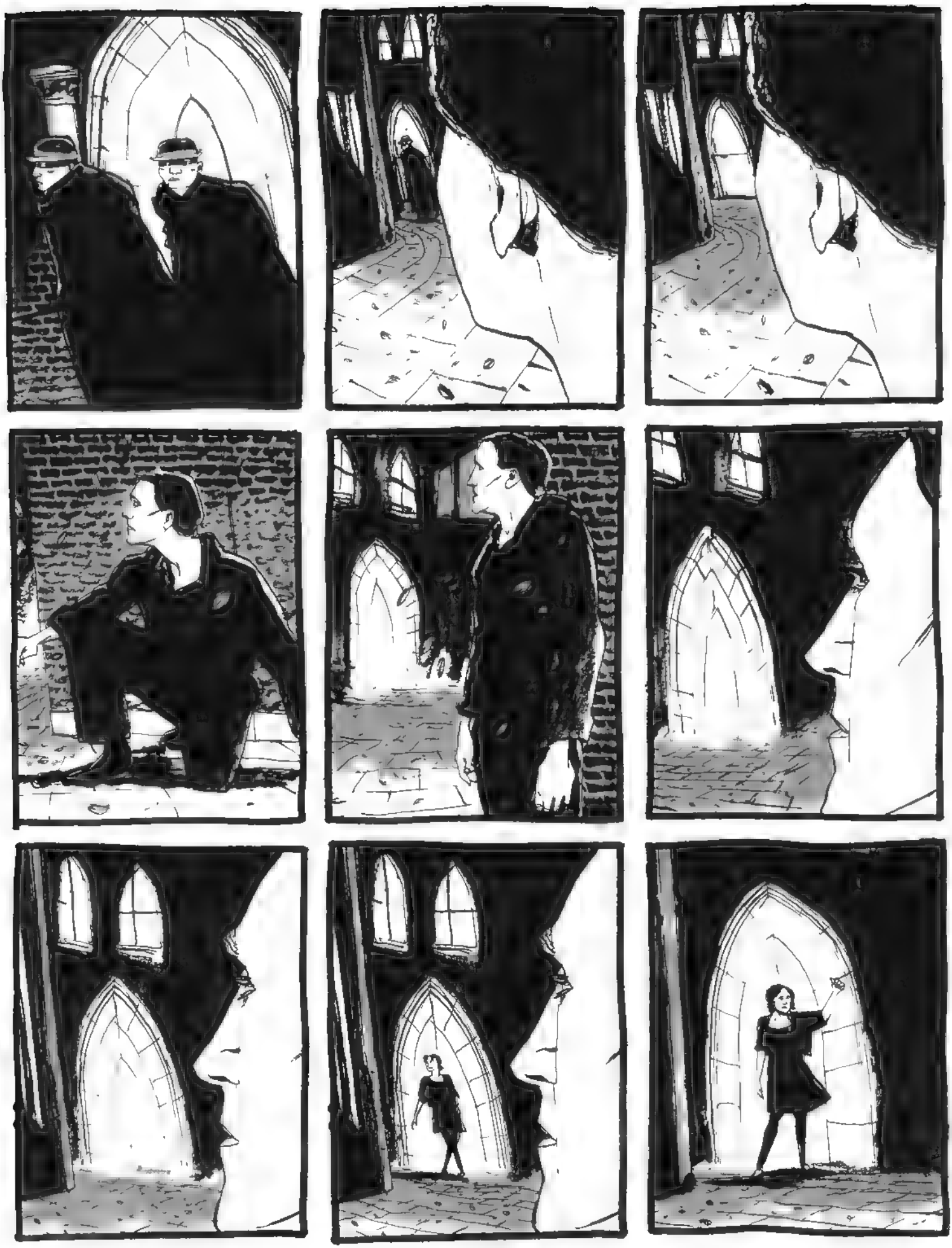


AND THE KING KNEW HE COULDN'T CHANGE THE EVENTS THAT HAD BEEN SET INTO MOTION. AND EVEN IF HE DID, EVEN IF HE HALTED BUILDING WORK NOW, IMMEDIATELY, HOW COULD HE POSSIBLY FORESEE WHAT THAT WOULD INCUR. WHEREAS BEFORE EVERYTHING HE DID SEEMED TO BE A POSITIVE STEP, A MOVEMENT FORWARD, NOW HE FELT BEWILDERED, NOT KNOWING WHERE TO TURN, HIS BELIEF IN HIMSELF SHATTERED,

AT SEA.

And shattered it.
And the moral of the story is:
Shit happens.
Um.
You said a bad word.
Yes. That's because most of the things that happen are bad.
So curl up by the fire, petal. You'll be safe by the fire.





Come on
Now.

Go!
Uh?
Ahhhh....

YOU ARE HERE
MY CONSTERNATION!
COME BACK!
COME BACK

COME BACK
YOU ARE HERE.
YOU GREAT CLUMSY!
I LOST MY CONSERNATION

Shhhhh!
YOU GREAT CLUMSY CLUMSIES!
Shut up!
Come on, get going
Oh, great

Where are you?
Where are you, now?
YOU ARE HERE.

chapter 11
new world
So what happened?
I don't know
I remember getting to the office
I remember it was a cold day. And grey
I remember the clutter on my desk and the piles of papers. and the feeling of a lack of breath
Then I remember a feeling, a really **palpable** feeling of déja vu.

Like I'd done this before. sitting at my desk. sorting out papers. sorting out problems. not just once before. but an almost..
Like a spiral. you know? Like I could see the same day. the same papers repeated endlessly into the past and endlessly into the future.
I remember the office was hot. and I couldn't catch my breath.
Then Frank from down the corridor came in and told me about the drop in sales.
Then the fan packed up
Then I was trying to get the fan to work.
Then I was a cat.
right.
Well. here we are.
You live **here**?

Yes.
Well..
Yes.. well.. thank you.
Yes..
For.. you know..
Sure.. well..
Look. come up.
No. no. it's okay.
Sure. come up. Meet my wife. she'll cook us something.. she'll be a bit surprised. obviously. I mean. I haven't been home for five years. but..
No. no.. you go up.
Come on..
You've got a lot of catching up to do.

Well... I do have a parrot to strangle...
I'll be fine
Well... okay, but... thank you... really...
Sure
See you

What's up?
What's up? What's up?
NOTHING!
NOTHING Is up!
Did you lose something?
Yes. I lost my consternation
I only have two heavenly bodies left
This must be yours
Thank you

Look. you've got three now.
So?
So. a whole world of possibilities opens up now you've got three.
You're just trying to make me feel better
Sure. you can juggle with three
You do know how to juggle. don't you?
What do you think?
What? The cosmic juggler doesn't know how to juggle? That's a sin.
Come on. I'll teach you
Come on. look lively.
Okay. first you throw one ball.
Heavenly body

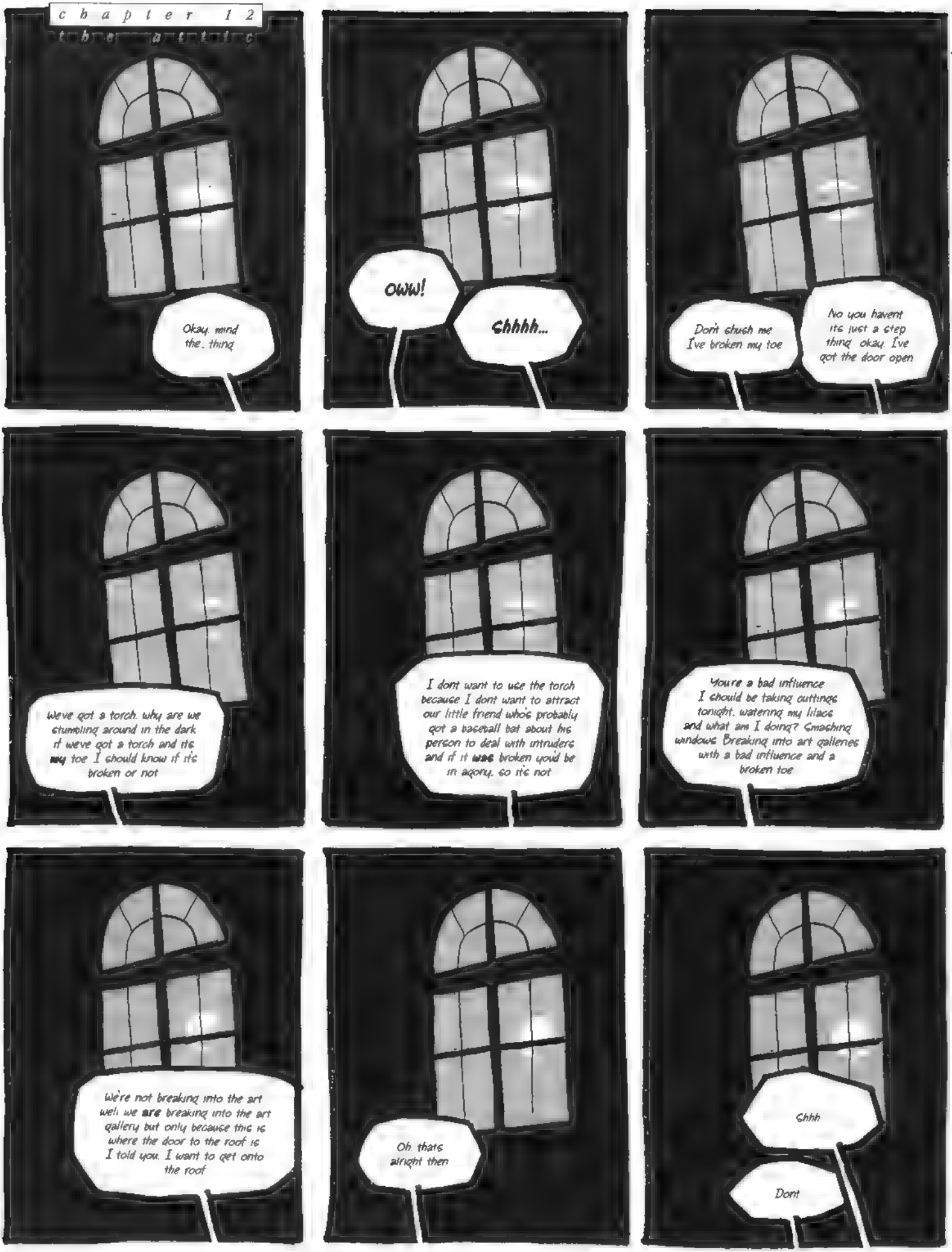
My mistake
One heavenly body from one hand to the other in a smooth, controlled arc.
That's it
Good.
Okay, now you have to throw the second one when the first is at the apex of its arc.

Go on
Go on...
That's it. That's it.. you're a natural
Okay. okay
Here's the tricky bit..
You have to do one jug
What's a jug?
You start with two ba.. heavenly bodies in one hand and one in the other
Then you throw one of the two. then the one. then the other one and catch them all. That's one jug **Ready?**

No
Sure you are. you're a natural Okay. go
Go on
Go on..
I can't
Go on. you can do it..
Go on..

Dear Jonathan -
Enclosed one pen.
New novel expected
in a week or two.
Food in fridge
(and in the woods).
Karen will drop by
occasionally until
things calm down.
Respect -
LC
That's it!
That's it!
Keep it going...
that's it!

The boy's
a natural!


chapter 12
the attic
Okay, mind the...thing
OWW!
Chhhh...
Don't shush me I've broken my toe
No you haven't it's just a step thing, okay. I've got the door open
We've got a torch, why are we stumbling around in the dark if we've got a torch and it's my toe I should know if it's broken or not
I don't want to use the torch because I don't want to attract our little friend who's probably got a baseball bat about his person to deal with intruders and if it was broken you'd be in agony, so it's not
You're a bad influence I should be taking cuttings tonight, watering my lilacs and what am I doing? Smashing windows. Breaking into art galleries with a bad influence and a broken toe
We're not breaking into the art well we are breaking into the art gallery but only because this is where the door to the roof is I told you. I want to get onto the roof
Oh, that's alright then
Chhh
Don't

Oh my God

Look at all this stuff
This place is endless...

God, this is strange... it reminds me so much of when I was a kid...
Yeah? How come?

I used to have a tree-house... the one thing my father did for me

And I'd sneak out of the house at night with my torch, and hide in the tree-house with all this rubbish I found and pretended were precious objects

My refuge

You've never mentioned your parents before
They're not worth mentioning

That's pretty cold
Yes. I suppose so..
I didn't have a very happy time as a kid
Really. I'm surprised.. you seem so.. sorted.
A front. my boy. a front.
Do you want to tell me..
No. not really.
I would hide from my father in my tree-house and pretend to be God.
A fire and brimstone. eye for an eye. old testament God
Really? I didn't peg you for a religious person
I can't believe in a god who would let the stuff that I went through happen..
That whole idea of a god.. a male god looking down on us.. passive or purposeful.. the whole thing's nasty and creepy and I don't want anything to do with it.

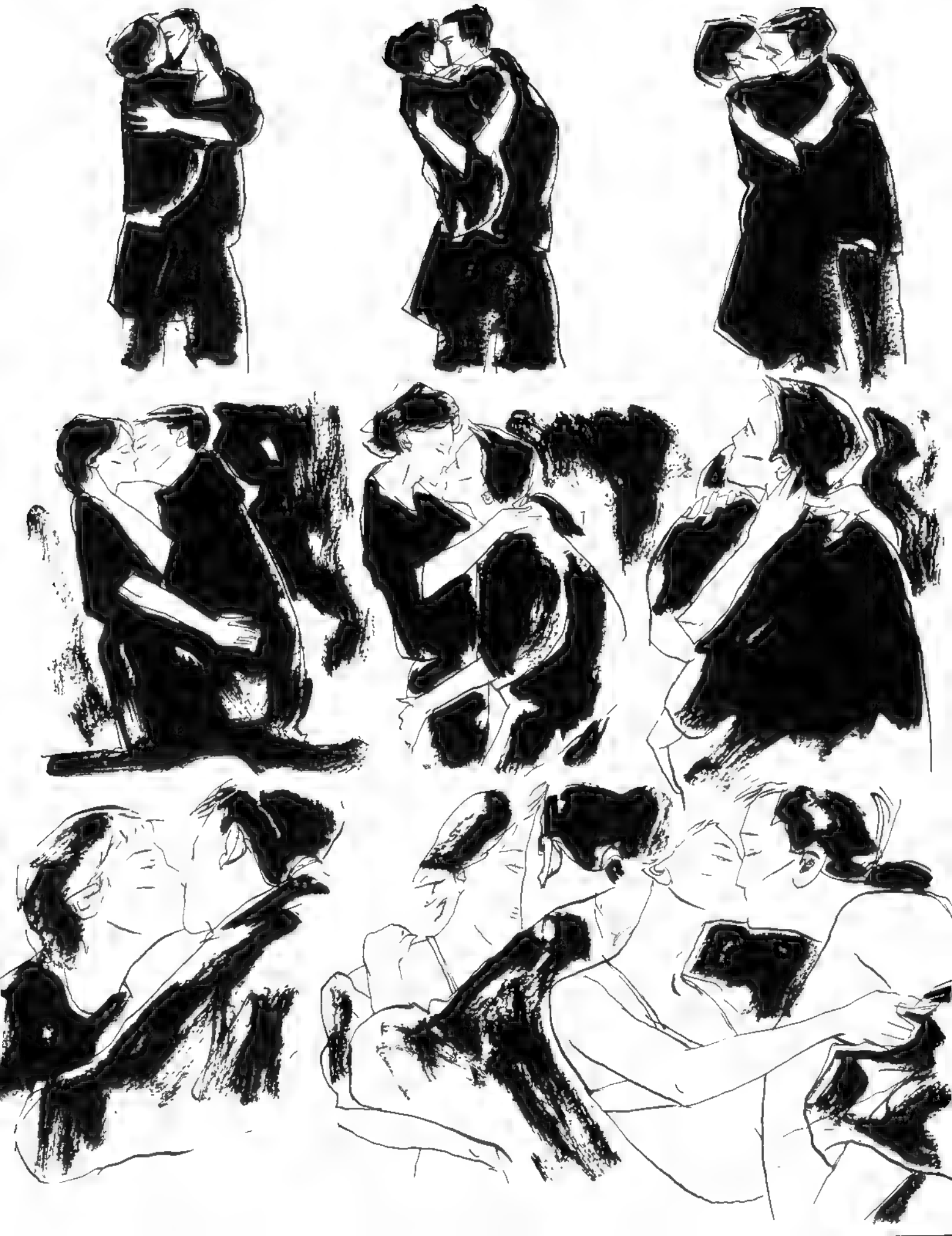
Look at this ammonite
Beautiful
When I was a kid all I wanted to be was a zoologist.
Oh yeah?
I loved animals and plants and dinosaurs and all that stuff. and I found this word 'zoologist.'
But you followed your drawing.
Well. I always loved drawing too. and while all the other kids in class were drawing trees and stuff. I always thought... y'know. this is crazy. I can draw okay. but I'm never going to be able to make a painting as good as a tree. I mean. it's **perfect**... what's the **point**...
So I ended up only making pictures that reflect what's up **here**.
So do you believe your ability to draw is God-given?

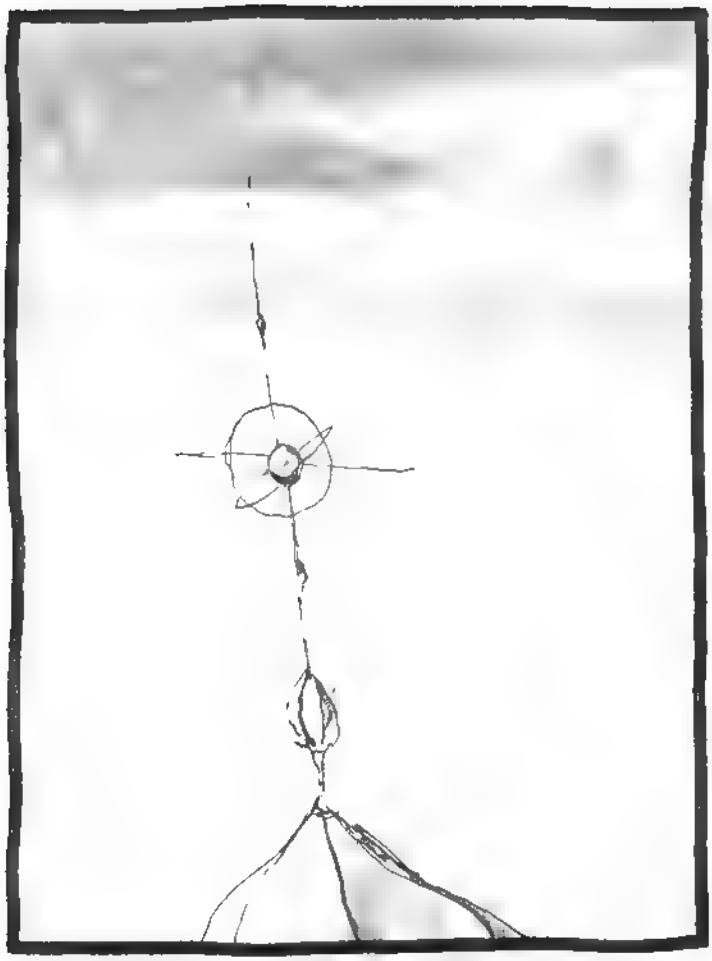
No, no... that's nonsense
It's just hard work really... it's just paying attention
How did the painting of me turn out?
It's too fussy, it's too... worried
That's the problem with painting **and** God really. The closer you are to both of them, the less you see
The more I worry over the canvas, because you were sitting in front of me, and because I could see every detail, because I wanted to impress... the more literal information I could see, the less emotional information got onto the canvas... it's hard to explain
It's like... erm... its when I'm distracted by the beauty of a single mark on the paper or a particular combination of colours, that I catch a glimpse of the whole thing
and begin to understand...
Come on, cloud nine, let's go up to the roof
No, **look**, it's like a shark... You have to keep swimming and painting otherwise you stop... otherwise you die, but you don't notice you've died, because you're distracted...
No... you don't notice you're still **swimming** because you're distracted...

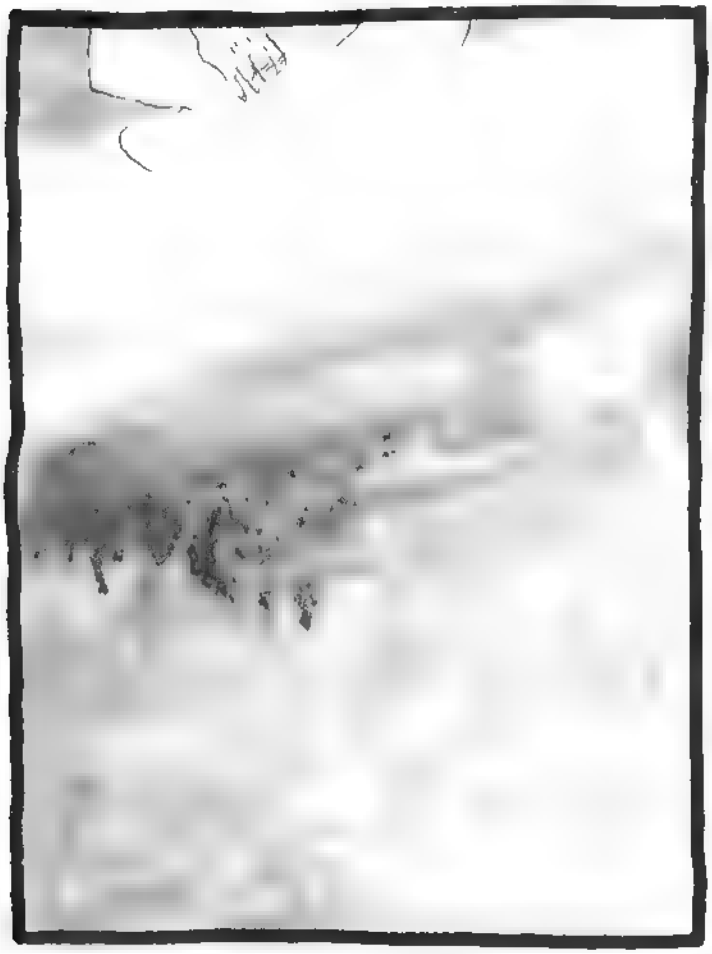
...if you're a shark...
...or a pelican.
if you're a pelican
A pelican?
No, yeah. I've got it.
I thought it was a shark, but
actually it's a distracted pelican...
No, wait. It's all
clear to me now...

Beautiful. isn't it?
It's such a lovely, warm night
I like your god
Which one. the shark or the pelican?

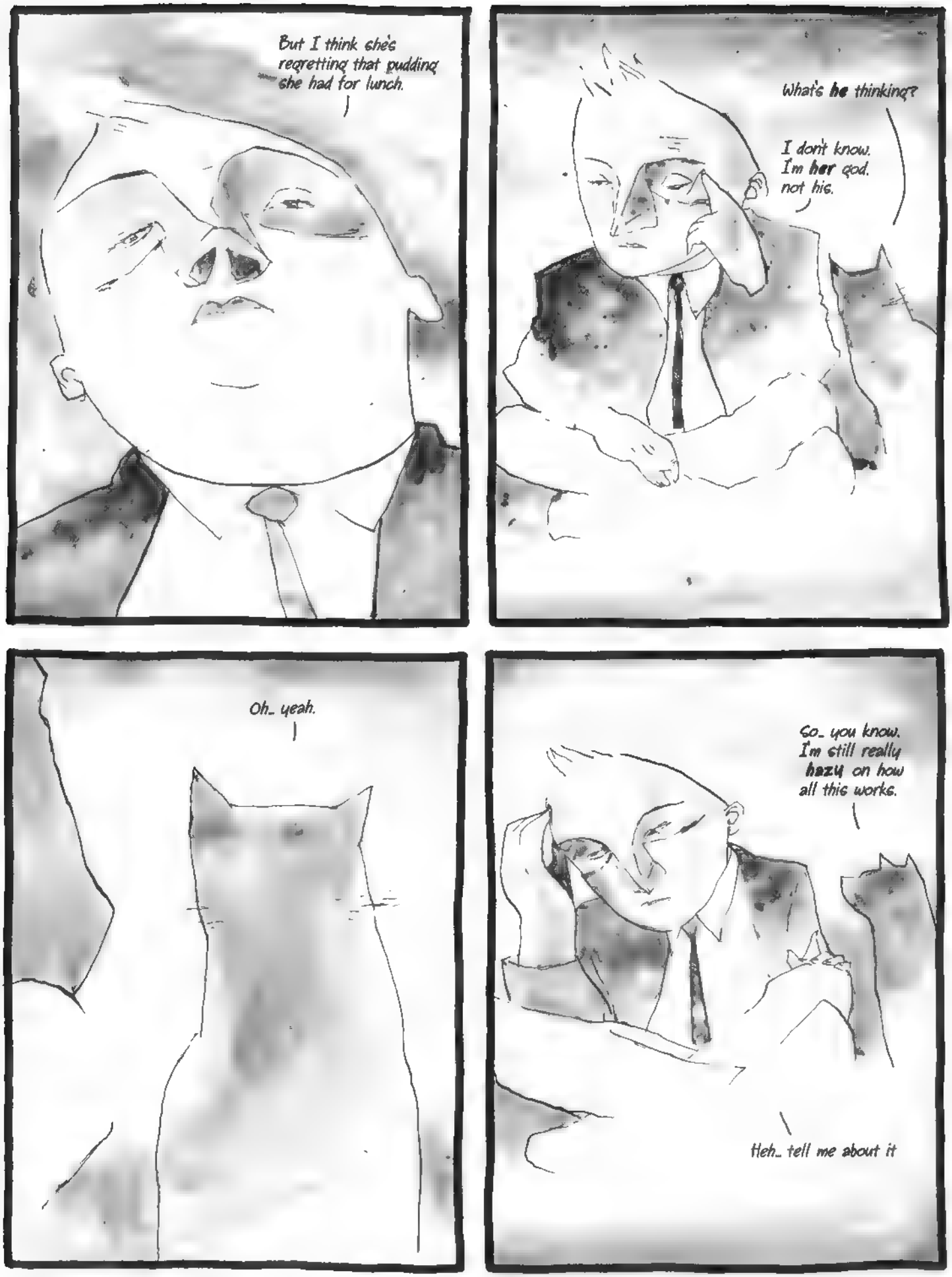
No. creativity
That's your god.
That's so much more of a caressing, loving god than I experienced as a child
You thinking of becoming one of the faithful?
I'm open to persuasion







They seem to be having a good time of it..


But I think she's regretting that pudding she had for lunch.
What's **he** thinking?
I don't know. I'm **her** god. not his.
Oh.. yeah.
So.. you know. I'm still really **hazy** on how all this works.
Heh.. tell me about it

So, you say you're **her** god, but I thought you **created** her.
No. God created everything, right?
Right.
But each one of these people creates their **own** god, right?
...right...
Right.
So... what are you saying, that creation is just a sort of repeating pattern?
I think so. Like a spiral. It repeats but it also comments on itself. See?
No, not really.

Oh well...
So. what came **first** then?
Ah... well. you've put your paw on it there. haven't you?
Look. the way I see it is this. It's all about **rhythm**. It's all about **pattern**.

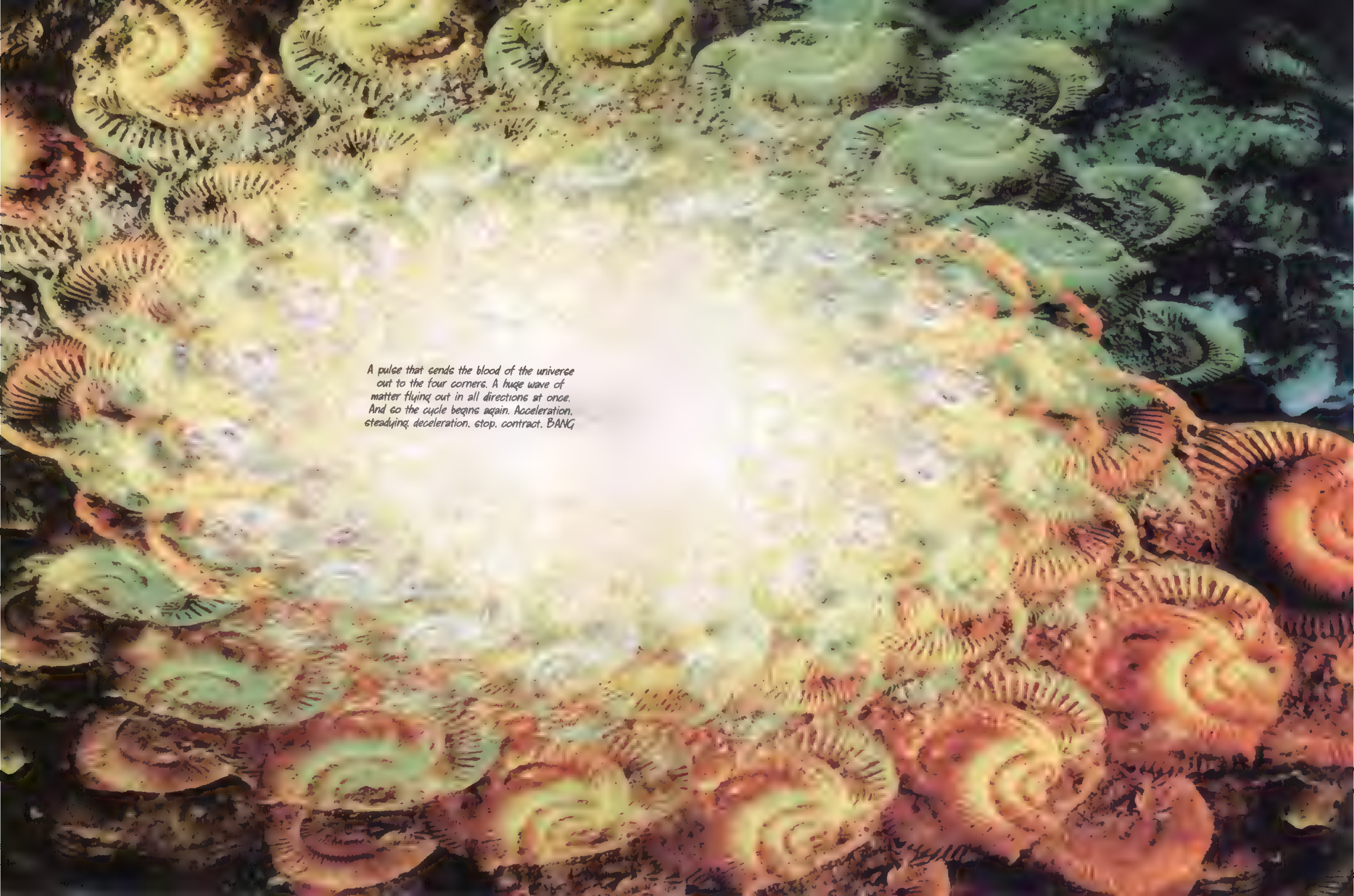
Look at these two
It started with a heartbeat There's the rhythm.
Now that's the engine for all this. that basic rhythm
The thing about engines is, they have to be callibrated. They have to be aligned. But when they are ticking over just right... well.
Everything works a treat.

So watch...

watch the rhythm of their bodies, moving together, watch the man pushing, the woman arch, look at the blood pumping. Look at the cells dying and being replaced, look at the cycles of motion, beating in time with the heart.

Now look at the skies, cycling above their heads. look at the moon conducting the waters on the shore. look at the sun clocking the planets.

Now look further, further... See the stars moving away from the heart, accelerating, then steadying, then slowly, slowly they stop and start to contract, gradually retracing their steps, gathering momentum, smaller counter rhythms set up constantly as the stars converge, faster, faster, until...


A pulse that sends the blood of the universe out to the four corners. A huge wave of matter flying out in all directions at once. And so the cycle begins again. Acceleration. steadying. deceleration. stop. contract. BANG

Do you **see**?
We are living inside the **heartbeat** of **God**.
Damned impressive.
Sure.
So what are you doing sitting on a cloud, making notes on this woman's stomach contents for them?

Well. I'm just a figment. I don't really exist.
Oh. right.
Yeah. She doesn't believe in me really, but I hang around to do what I can.. You know. talk her out of the second helping.. that sort of thing.
I see.
Hang on. they're nearly finished. I should get ready to give her a few stray thoughts..
So. this is it. is it? Your job? Reminding her about her chocolate cake. or her unhappy childhood. or.. that sort of stuff.
Don't you feel a bit.. I don't know. **emasculated**?

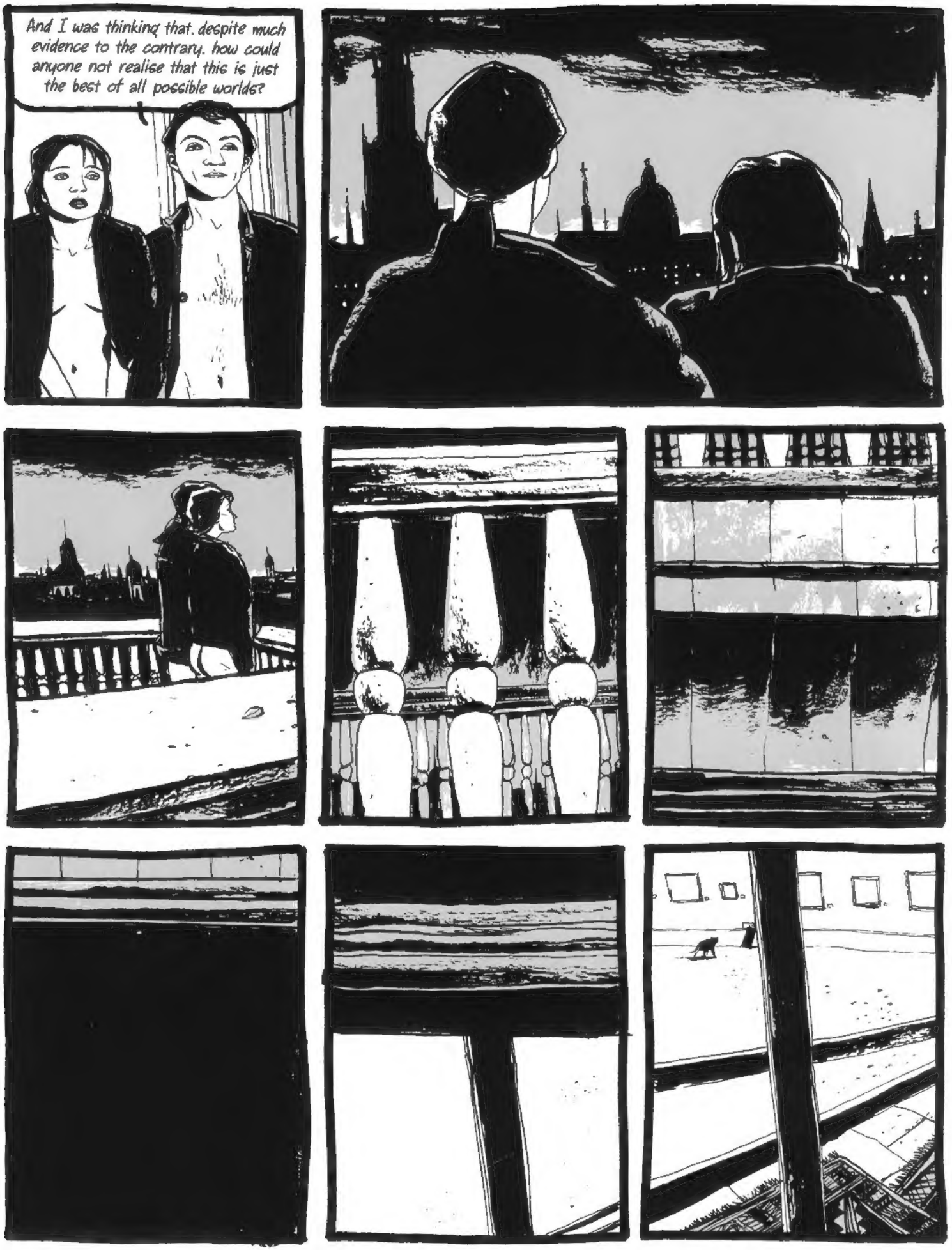
It's not all bad news. Sometimes I remind her how nice things are.
Yeah? Like what?
Like... rainy Sundays, or that red wine she had when she was twenty-two
Still not exactly earth-shattering stuff, is it?
God is in the details.
That's a nice thought.
Yeah... it's not one of mine. She read it in a book, once.
Hang on, here we go...

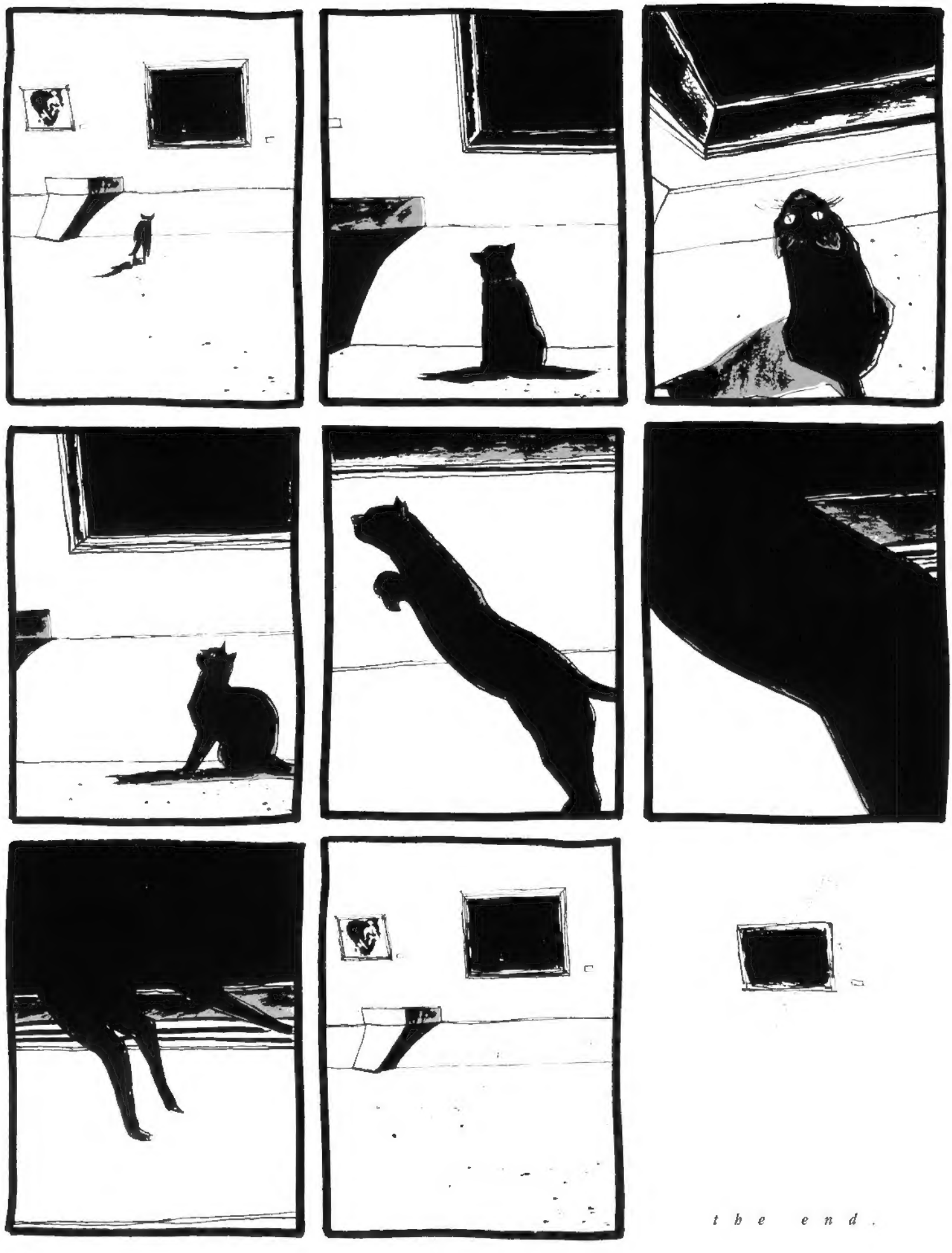
What are you thinking?
Hmmm?
Oh.. stuff.
What kind of stuff?
Oh.. the usual.. post coital.. clouds.. stars.. chocolate cake.. stuff..
Oh. **that** stuff.

I was thinking about how these clouds look like the clouds I remember watching from my tree-house
How I saw whales and continents and faces in them as they drifted by
I was thinking how strange these patterns are. How a cloud can look like a bird, or how a moment now can remind me of a moment twenty years ago.
I can almost taste the air from my old garden.
I was thinking that I realise that the older I get, the easier it is to see the patterns, how **obvious** the connections seem to be
And how the more I look, the more connections I see
Types of people, types of clouds, types of good times
I was wondering how far back you can step, or how far back you **have** to step before you see the whole picture, an infinite web of connections and patterns.
And I was wondering that, maybe...

maybe you get to the point in your life when all you see are the patterns. that maybe you reach a point where you've seen them all before.
And although there may be a new wrinkle or two, **basically** you recognise all the cycles, all the patterns..
And maybe **that's** what makes dying bearable.
Maybe you could say, 'Okay, I've seen all this before, maybe not **exactly** this but I can extrapolate..
I can imagine how this turns out..
..and maybe you can die feeling some sort of understanding.. a contentment.
Jesus..
I was wondering why the sun isn't green.

What?
Well. if the sun's yellow. right? And the sky's blue. and the sun shines through the sky. Why doesn't it look green?
At least around the edges?
HA HA HA


And I was thinking that, despite much evidence to the contrary, how could anyone not realise that this is just the best of all possible worlds?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